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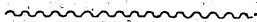
A GENERAL SURVEY

OF THE

ORGANIZATION, GOVERNMENT,

AND

DISCIPLINE OF CHRISTIAN CHURCHES.



NEW HAVEN:

PUBLISHED BY A. H. MALTBY.

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PREFACE.

THE Congregational Catechism exhibits in a condensed form the Constitution of the first Christian Churches ; the principal modifications of ecclesiastical government in succeeding ages ; the Constitution of the Congregational churches and its superiority to other ecclesiastical systems ; together with an outline of the general frame and regulations of the other principal forms of church order and government. The most important principle advanced in the work, is, that the divine Head of the church established no complete system of order and rule according to which His church must be organized and governed, to the exclusion of every other ; but yet that the Congregational system corresponds most closely with the primitive plan, and answers best the ends of confederation in Christian churches.

The work is designed for the use of ministers of the Gospel, theological students, and intelligent readers generally; and it is hoped it may prove to be a convenient Text-book for the instruction of classes by pastors and teachers: and be received with favor wherever the religious institutions of the pilgrim fathers of New England are held in esteem.

In prosecuting his task, the author has been assisted by the Rev. Dr. Murdock, of New Haven, to whom he is indebted for those parts, especially, which relate to the Jewish Synagogue, and the constitution of the church in the ages immediately succeeding the Apostles. He has also to acknowledge his indebtedness to the Dissenter's Catechism, a work in use among the English Independents, for aid in preparing the chapter on the Protestant Episcopal church.

EDWARD R. TYLER.

New Haven, Dec. 12, 1843.

THE
CONGREGATIONAL CATECHISM.

CHAPTER I.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF CHURCH POLITY.

QUESTION 1. What is meant by Ecclesiastical Polity?

ANSWER. The principles and rules by which churches are regulated and governed.

Q. 2. What is a church?

A. A company of professed believers in Christ, associated together for the public worship of God, for the observance of Christian ordinances, and for mutual aid and encouragement in all Christian duties.

Q. 3. Whence must be derived all imperative rules for the regulation and government of churches?

A. From the sacred Scriptures. It is ad-

mitted by all Protestants that the Bible is the only *rule* of faith and practice.

Q. 4. Do the Scriptures prescribe any complete system of church polity, obligatory upon Christians in all ages and countries?

A. They do not. They merely inculcate certain general principles, and enjoin certain ordinances, which all Christians should observe.

Q. 5. What are some of these general principles?

A. That all Christians are *brethren* in Christ, on a footing of perfect equality in the church, and should be actuated by the purest love and the most fraternal feelings. Matt. xxiii. 8–12. Mark x. 41–45. John xiii. 34, 35. John xv. 12. Rom. xii. 3–10, 16. James iii. 1. 1 Pet. i. 22, and iii. 8, 9. That the ends of their confederation in churches should be their mutual edification and advancement in holiness, and the diffusion of religious knowledge and piety around them. Matt. v. 13–16. 1 Cor. viii. 9–13. Eph. iv. 11–16. 1 Tim. iii. 15. James v. 16–20. And that all their proceedings should harmonize with the spirit of their religion, “all things be done decently and in order,” and for the furtherance of the ends of their confederation. 1 Cor. xiii. 33, 40.

Q. 6. What do you infer from the omission of the Apostles to record a system of express rules of church order, and exact descriptions of their own ecclesiastical usages ?

A. That such points as are omitted in the inspired record, are not to be held essential to the right organization and ordering of a church; and that they are designedly left open for consideration and determination by human discretion in each age and country. See Whateley's Kingdom of Christ, Essay II, Sections 12 and 16.

Q. 7. What authority has the *mere* example or practice of the Apostolic age in respect to the organization and government of churches ?

A. It has not the authority of a *law*, obligatory upon all succeeding ages ; but it is an exemplification of Apostolic wisdom and prudence, in adopting suitable rules and regulations for the infant churches, in that age and state of the world.

Q. 8. What belongs to a church, from the essential nature of a community ?

A. It belongs to the very essence of a community that it should have, first, officers of some kind ; secondly, rules enforced by penalties ; and, thirdly, a power of receiving and

excluding members. See Whateley's Kingdom of Christ, Essay II, Section 2.

Q. 9. What is manifestly excluded from a church, by the nature of Christianity, though not, perhaps, by express precept?

A. 1. The very nature of Christianity, as it aims to found a spiritual and not a temporal kingdom, excludes all temporal sanctions, and admits only those that are spiritual, for the support and enforcement of ecclesiastical laws.

A. 2. As the Christian religion recognizes only one sacrifice for sin, that made by Jesus Christ upon the cross, it forever excludes from the Christian church, all real *sacrifices*, all real *altars*, and a literal *priesthood*.

A. 3. As Christianity is altogether a spiritual religion, announcing the coming of the promised Messiah, and offering grace and salvation to all who repent of their sins and believe and obey his Gospel, it of course annuls all the types and shadows of the Old Testament dispensation, dispels all mysterious rites, which shroud the way of salvation in obscurity, and requires a simple, direct worship, with as few ceremonies as will comport with decency and the efficacy of religious ordinances. John iv. 21-24. 1 John ii. 8.

A. 4. As it places all Christians, as such, on a footing of perfect equality with each other, it necessarily prohibits all dominion and lordship in the church, all subjection or subordination of one portion of the household of faith to the control of another, and all distinctions between clergymen and laymen, which would be incompatible with the most fraternal and affectionate feelings and intercourse.—Matt. xx. 27. Whateley, Essay II, Sec. 16.

Q. 10. What system of ecclesiastical polity and church-order may be considered as the most perfect?

A. That which is most in harmony with all the principles and precepts of Christianity, best secures the regular and profitable observance of Christian ordinances, and most effectually attains all the ends of Christian confederation.

Q. 11. What are the consequences of an error of judgment in regulating a church?

A. The error is not fatal to the *being* of a church, the members of which are united together in a Christian spirit, agreeably, as they suppose, to the rules of the Gospel. But the error will be apt, in a greater or less degree, to mar their piety and impair their usefulness.

Whoever insists that an association of Christians cannot be a church, unless they are organized and governed in strict accordance with a fixed and perfect model, must account for the omission of such a platform of government in the New Testament, and for the smiles of divine providence on all Christian sects who agree in holding the Head, however they may differ in forms and ceremonies.

Q. 12. Are the members of a local church bound to regard its by-laws and other regulations, which are not contrary to the Scriptures, but on the other hand, are not expressly enjoined in them ?

A. Certainly. Every church must have some rules for conducting its business ; and the determination of these rules must be left to the good sense and judgment of the members, so far as the sacred writers have not particularly mentioned and prescribed them. The by-laws of the church, therefore, being made in conformity with the divine plan, have the same power to bind the conscience as the enactments of civil government.

Q. 13. Where does all ecclesiastical power and authority reside ?

A. Primarily, in the individual communities

or local churches ; and then in the officers of their appointment, and in the conventions and representative bodies, to which the churches give their sanction.

Q. 14. Whence does a local church derive all its power ?

A. From the good pleasure of God, authorizing and requiring Christians to form themselves into churches, and to regulate all their proceedings according to their discretion, in conformity with the laws of God.

Q. 15. Are officers an essential part of a church ?

A. A church may *exist* without officers, like any other corporation or society, but it is not prepared to act efficiently and in a regular manner, until it becomes an *organized* body, or has officers to preside over its movements and to execute its will.

Q. 16. What is it that imparts official power to the officers of a church ?

A. Their election or appointment by the church according to its by-laws, and their formal induction into office agreeably to the same laws.

Q. 17. What are the limits and boundaries of official power in the officers of a church ?

A. Each officer possesses precisely those powers, and those only, which the church gave to him, when it appointed him to be a church officer.

Q. 18. Do the Scriptures prescribe the number, the grades, and the powers of church officers ?

A. They do not. They leave each church at liberty to follow its own discretion in this matter, and only admonish them to keep in sight the great principles of their religion, and to preserve themselves a holy, spiritual body.

Q. 19. What obedience is due to church officers ?

A. Such as is due from the citizens of a free State, or the members of any voluntary association, to those whom they have invested with official power.

Q. 20. Are the churches under obligation to provide for the temporal support of their religious teachers ?

A. Yes. Consult 1 Cor. ix. 14. 2 Cor. xi. 7-9, and 12, 13. Yet we have no evidence that in the primitive church any except the traveling preachers, Apostles, and Evangelists, derived their support from the people. The elders and teachers of the local churches

probably supported themselves by their own industry, not being wholly occupied in the service of the church.

Q. 21. In what relation do local churches stand to each other ?

A. As churches, they are entirely distinct and independent bodies, with no jurisdiction or control over each other. But as they are associations of the same class of people, for the very same purposes, and under the same Christian principles, the most perfect cordiality, and the mutual interchange of kind offices, should exist among them. And they may and should form confederacies for their common benefit, so far as circumstances will permit ; and they not only may establish rules for friendly intercourse and correspondence, but they may organize synods, or conventions of delegates, to superintend their common interests, and clothe them with such powers as are compatible with the principles of Christianity and the best interests of the churches.

Q. 22. In what relation do the churches in any country stand to the State or civil power ?

A. In that of voluntary associations, which owe obedience and respect to the laws, and

are entitled to protection, and to entire freedom in the management of their own affairs in their own way, provided they do not violate the rights of other citizens.

CHAPTER II.

CONSTITUTION OF THE PRIMITIVE CHRISTIAN CHURCHES, OR OF THOSE WHICH WERE GATHERED AND ORGANIZED IN THE APOSTOLIC AGE.

Q. 23. In what acceptations or senses is the word *Church* used in the New Testament?

A. Sometimes it denotes the aggregate or whole number of professed believers of the gospel, or what is called the *Universal Visible Church*: see Philip. iii. 6. 1 Cor. xii. 28. Eph. iii. 21. At other times it denotes all the redeemed and sanctified, or the *Universal Invisible Church*: see Matt. xvi. 18. Eph. i. 22, and iii. 10, and v. 24, 25, &c. But most commonly it denotes the organized body of Christians assembling regularly for worship in a particular place, town or city, or what may

be called a *Local Church* : Acts ii. 47. 1 Cor. xiv. 23. Acts ix. 31, and xv. 41, &c.

Q. 24. When a Jew or Pagan was converted to Christianity, what religious rites did he pass under ?

A. He was baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit : Matt. xxviii. 19.

This baptism was ordinarily administered by the teacher that converted him, or by an attendant of the teacher, and as soon as the genuineness of his conversion was manifested. Acts ii. 38, 41, and viii. 12, 13, 36-38, and ix. 18, and x. 47, 48, and xvi. 33, and xviii. 8, John iv. 2, 1 Cor. i. 14. After such baptism, it was not uncommon for an apostle to lay his hand upon the convert and pray that he might receive the Holy Spirit. Acts viii. 15, 17, 19, and xix. 6.

Q. 25. Did a person by passing under these rites become a member of any local church ?

A. No. He thereby became no more than a visible Christian, or a member of the universal visible church. Such must have been the case with the Eunuch, whom Philip baptized, Acts viii. 36, and with all the first converts in any place to which the gospel was carried, until a church could be there established.

Q. 26. What proof is there that in the apostolic age, there were no *diocesan* or *provincial* or *national* churches embracing many congregations ?

A. No such ecclesiastical body is mentioned or alluded to, throughout the New Testament ; the word church is never so used in reference to Christians ; no epistle is addressed to such an ecclesiastical body ; and no action of any such body, or of its officers, is recorded in the New Testament. On the contrary, we find that the seven churches in the province of Proconsular Asia, are called "the seven churches of Asia," Rev. i. 4, 11, 20 ; each of them is designated by the city where it was located ; and each is addressed as a distinct and a whole church : Rev. ii. and iii. And whenever churches of any province or country are spoken of, they are uniformly designated as the *churches* of that province : for example, "the churches of Galatia" and "the churches of Asia," 1 Cor. xvi. 1, 19 ; "the churches of Macedonia," 2 Cor. viii. 1 ; "the churches of Judea," Gal. i. 22 ; Paul went through Syria confirming the churches, Acts xv. 41. The general epistles of the apostles, Peter, James, and John, are not addressed to *churches*,

but to *Christians* generally, or to the individual converts in certain countries or provinces, just as if there were no ecclesiastical ties or combinations uniting them in larger masses or in well known provincial and national bodies.

Q. 27. What evidence have we that the early Christians were combined together in regular organized bodies, or that their local churches were not merely fortuitous meetings of such Christians as happened to get together?

A. 1. The brethren in each particular city or town had regular and permanent officers ordained over them, who were charged with the performance of appropriate functions in their respective churches: Acts xiv. 23, and xv. 4, 6, 23, and xx. 17. Titus i. 5. 1 Tim. v. 1, 17, 19, and iii. 3-8, &c. James v. 14. 1 Peter v. 1-5.

A. 2. Letters were addressed to the brethren, through their officers; and their past history and conduct as permanent bodies were scanned, and warnings and exhortations in regard to their future conduct addressed to them: see the epistles to the seven churches of Asia, Rev. chap. i. and ii. Philip. i. 1, and ii. 19, 25, &c. Col. i. 1-11, 21-23.

A. 3. The brethren were charged with the maintenance of watchfulness over each other, with caution whom they admitted to fellowship, and with the discipline and excommunication of incorrigible offenders against the laws of Christianity: Matt. xviii. 15-18. Heb. x. 25. 1 Thess. v. 14. 1 Cor. v. 1-13. 2 Thess. iii. 14, 15.

Q. 28. How were the early Christians distributed and aggregated into these organized bodies, called churches?

A. Not by the decrees or commands of any ecclesiastical authorities, (as enlisted soldiers are distributed into companies and regiments by their commanding officers,) but by a voluntary union among themselves, with the approbation and advice of those who were instrumental in their conversion.

For, in the absence of the compulsory power of either civil or ecclesiastical courts, the only possible way of forming churches, is by the voluntary confederation of individuals. The primitive Christians, doubtless, followed the instructions and advice of the apostles and evangelists, but they followed as freemen. They were drawn together by their common views, common hopes, and common desire to enjoy Christian fellowship and ordinances, and to conform their conduct to the will of Christ, and combine their strength in extending the blessings of his king-

dom. 2 Cor. viii. 8. Acts ii. 41-47, and v. 12-14, and xiv. 22, 23.

Q. 29. What limits had the primitive churches, both as to the number of members, and the extent of territory allotted to each?

A. No precise limits, probably, were established; though all the Christians in a city or town, seem to have constituted but one church, for we never read of two churches in the same place.

Yet Cenchrea, one of the ports of Corinth, a few miles from it, had a separate church: Rom. xvi. 1. The Greek word, translated "church," properly denotes an assembly or congregation of people *called together*; and Paul, 1 Cor. xiv. 23, speaks of "*the whole church* at Corinth, being come together into one place, and all speaking with tongues," as producing confusion; and he directs the Corinthians to regulate their meetings, so that "all things be done decently and in order." The primitive churches seem always to have been named either from the city or village where the members resided, or from the building in which the church held its meetings. Rom. xvi. 5. 1 Cor. xvi. 19. Col. iv. 15. Philem. 2.

Q. 30. Had these local churches any formal Articles of confederation or written Church-Covenants?

A. The new Testament does not inform us:

but it is most probable they had neither written covenants, nor written creeds. Yet we cannot suppose them ignorant of the ends and objects of their union in churches, and of their duties and obligations as members of such fraternities. They were formed into churches by the apostles themselves, and the assistants of the apostles ; and they were instructed and counseled from time to time by inspired men, both orally and by epistles. That they had definite rules and regulations for their ecclesiastical proceedings, is manifest. See Acts xvi. 4. 1 Cor. vii. 17, and xiv. 33-37. 2 Cor. xi. 28. 1 Thess. ii. 13, 14, and iv. 1, 2.

Q. 31. In what relation did these primitive churches stand to each other ?

A. They were completely independent bodies. That is, they had power to appoint and to depose their own officers, to administer discipline, and to regulate and determine all their other ecclesiastical concerns, subject to no court of appeal or higher power having authority to reverse their decisions. They were united to one another by the ties of a common faith, common hopes, and common aims ; but they acknowledged no subjection or subordination of one church to another ; nor did they

in the Apostolic age enter into any confederation of churches, thereby creating a central power having dominion over them all. See Murdock's *Mosheim*, Cent. I, P. II, Ch. II, § 14, and Cent. II, P. II, Ch. II, § 1, 2.

Q. 32. What is the evidence of this independency of the primitive churches ?

A. 1. There is no account in the Scriptures of the appointment, or notice of the existence of any prelate, presbytery, or consociation of churches, having power to review and reverse the decisions of particular churches, or to overrule their doings : nor is there any instance in which their acts were reviewed and set aside by any such authority. This omission to mention such a tribunal can be accounted for only on the supposition, that no tribunal of the kind existed.

A. 2. The Apostles themselves referred to the brotherhood every question, not determined by revelation, respecting the order and government of the churches. The question about circumcision, Acts xv. 22-32, was decided by the joint action of the Apostles, Elders, and "whole church." The appointment of Elders was made by a vote of the brethren. Compare Acts xiv. 23, with 2 Cor. viii. 19. The

word rendered "ordained" in the former passage, is rendered in the other, "chosen" of the churches. The sense in Acts xiv. 23, is, "when they had by *election or vote of the brethren* provided them with Elders in every church."

A. 3. The rejection, deposition, or exclusion from the church, of unworthy teachers, belonged to each particular church. One of the seven churches of Asia is commended for trying false teachers, Rev. ii. 2; and another is censured for tolerating them, Rev. ii. 20. The churches are also commanded, 1 John iv. 1, to try "the spirits," that is, the teachers of religion, for the purpose, evidently, of deciding who were worthy of confidence, and of forbidding those to teach in their assemblies, who should be found unworthy.

A. 4. Particular churches are expressly recognized as independent communities, admitting and excluding persons as members, Rom. xiv. 1, 1 Cor. v. 1-7, without appeal from their decisions, which manifestly includes all the powers of self-government.

Q. 33. After what general pattern were the first Christian churches modeled and regulated?

A. In a great measure after the pattern of the Jewish synagogues ; and not, as some have supposed, after the pattern of the Mosaic institutions for the national worship in the Tabernacle and Temple, in which there were three orders of proper *clergymen*, the High-priest, the Priests, and the Levites. See this subject ably and fully discussed in Camp. Vitringa de Synagoga Vetere Libri Tres. Franeker. 1696, pp. 1138, 4to. See also Lightfoot, Horae Hebr. et Talmud. in Matt. iv. 23. Whateley's Kingdom of Christ, Essay II, sec. 9.

It was perfectly natural for the first Christians, who being native Jews were accustomed all their lives to attend on the synagogues, to form and organize their religious fraternities, and to regulate their public worship, after the model of the synagogue. They could have similar officers, manage their ecclesiastical affairs in much the same way, and adopt the very same modes of worship, by merely substituting Christian principles and Christian doctrines for those of the Rabbis. Such churches, like synagogues, could be erected with no difficulty, in any place or country, wherever a sufficient number of members could be found ; and the ordinary worship was to be substantially the same in both, namely, the reading and expounding of the Holy Scriptures, accompanied with religious exhortations, and with public prayer and praise. On the contrary, the

Christian dispensation did not require, nor would it admit of the offices of a Highpriest, and common priests, with attending Levites; nor were the ceremonies and the highly typical worship of the temple, which were designed to foreshadow the coming Messiah and the way of salvation by Him, at all suited to the noonday light of gospel times, and to the more direct and spiritual worship which God now requires.

Q. 34. Will you state the origin, the objects, and the constitution of the ancient Jewish synagogues?

A. Synagogues appear to have formed no part of the original Mosaic establishment, but to have been a device of Ezra and the devout men of his times, for diffusing religious knowledge and piety among the people. They were popular assemblies, in which all classes of people met together fraternally, on the Sabbath and on festival days, to hear the Scriptures read and explained, to offer prayer and praise to God, and to receive religious instruction from any persons competent and willing to give it. See Prideaux's *Connections*, Part I, B. VI. Anno 434, and Vitringa de *Synagoga Vetere*.

As civil and sacred things in the Jewish Theocracy were completely blended together, all the public institu-

tions of any Jewish city, as well the religious and literary as the civil, were under the official direction and control of one single board of rulers, called The Elders of the city. According to the Talmudic writers, this board consisted of three men, well read in the Jewish law, chosen annually and constituting a local Sanhedrim under the great national Sanhedrim at Jerusalem. They decided whether a synagogue should be builded, where it should be located, on what occasions it should be opened for public worship, what religious exercises should be held, who might be admitted to fellowship in that worship, and who be excluded from it, or be "put out of the synagogue." They also attended and presided in the principal synagogue of their local jurisdiction, and were the only persons having authoritative control over the proceedings there. See Vitranga, p. 550-555. In consequence of their possessing this power, they were called, ἀρχισυνάγωγοι, rulers of the synagogue. Mark v. 22, 35, &c. Acts xiii. 15, and xviii. 8, 17. Vitranga, p. 610.

But although the Elders of each city had the entire control of all the synagogues in it, they were not officially, or by virtue of their relation to the synagogues, the persons whose duty it was to read and expound the Scriptures to the people, to recite the public prayers, and to give public religious instruction. For, in ancient times, there were no *officers* in a synagogue, to whom these duties appropriately belonged, but all the male persons present, who were competent and of reputable character, might be and actually were called out successively to perform these services, in accordance with certain rules of decorum and courtesy: Vitranga, p. 947. And hence the whole regular service of the synagogues might

be, and often was, performed without even the presence of an Elder: for there were numerous synagogues on which no Elder could ordinarily attend; as in small towns and villages which had no Elders, and in the large cities which had more synagogues than Elders. Nazareth had probably no Elders, (see Luke iv. 16-30,) and Jerusalem is said to have contained several hundred synagogues.

The most indispensable functionary in a synagogue was the minister, *ἐπιστάτης*, Hebr. (חֲזַן הַכְּנִסָּה), or the public *servant of the congregation*, who had charge at all times of the house, its furniture, utensils and books, and who, in time of worship, brought forward the sacred volume, called forth the readers, pointed out to them the lessons of the day and inspected their reading; and when the reading closed he returned the book to its place: Vitringa, p. 890. The Rabbis tell us, this functionary was not himself the reader of the lessons, but his duty was to call forth readers at each public service, seven persons successively, first a priest, if one were present, then a Levite, and then five laymen. While they read he was to look over them, and to point out their errors and mistakes in a low tone of voice, so that they might correct themselves on the spot. He also called for a translator. For the Scriptures were read in Hebrew, and translated into the vernacular tongue on the spot by some other person than the reader—the books of Moses, verse by verse, and the lessons from the Prophets, three verses at a time. And the translator must not read from any written translation, but must give a translation of his own. He might, also, paraphrase or explain the text

if he saw fit, but he must express himself modestly and with no ostentation. The translating of the lesson was a less honorable function than the reading of it : Vitringa, pp. 979, 1018, &c.

The Liturgy, or the written forms of prayer, (if such forms existed in the Apostolic age,) were few and simple, and such as might be, and actually were, read by any grave and competent person in the assembly, called out by the minister (חַזַּן). Vitringa, p. 1093. But afterwards the Liturgy was greatly enlarged; and it became so complicated that it required some experience to read it properly, and therefore this service was assigned to a particular officer in each synagogue : Vitringa, p. 1093. The man who thus led the congregation to the throne of grace, or who, in behalf of the assembly, presented before God their united prayers and praise, was called on this account, the (שְׁלִיחַ צִבּוּר) (*ἄγγελος τῆς ἐκκλησίας*) *Angel* or *Messenger* of the congregation : Vitringa, p. 905. During the recitation of the prayers, the minister (חַזַּן) waved a handkerchief from time to time to notify the people when to give the responses : Vitringa, pp. 1124, &c.

Besides the reading of the Scriptures and the recitation of the prayers, extempore sermons or addresses to the people were made by one or more persons, if any persons competent to instruct happened to be present and were disposed to speak. These discourses were of two kinds; the one in connection with the reading of the Scripture lessons, and explanatory of them, the expositor being any priest, Levite, or layman learned in the

law, (*νομικός*,) who might be present, (Vitringa, p. 688, &c. :) the other after the reading of the lessons and the prayers, being direct addresses to the people, based on some passage of Scripture, or without a text, occasionally made by an Elder, (Vitringa, pp. 694, 696,) or by any grave and learned man in the assembly, and even by strangers incidentally present: Vitringa, p. 704. Jesus Christ and his Apostles often thus preached in the synagogues: Matt. iv. 23, and xiii. 54. Luke iv. 16. John vi. 59, and xviii. 20. Acts iv. 20, and xiii. 5, 14-16, and xiv. 1, and xvii. 2, 17, and xviii. 4, 26.

Q. 35. In what respects were the order and government of the primitive churches different from those of synagogues ?

A. 1. As Christ's kingdom is not of this world, the officers of a church had no civil power, and could inflict no civil pains or penalties on offenders.

A. 2. As there was at first only *one* church in a city, each church had its own board of Elders ; who of course were the proper and appropriate officers of that church, and were ordinarily present to direct and to take an active part in all the meetings of the church, whether for business or for worship.

A. 3. The board of Elders in a church seems not to have been limited to just *three*

members, nor to have been annually renewed by re-election.

A. 4. Instead of one (ἑἷς) Deacon, the churches seem to have had several, and they probably performed a greater variety of duties than were assigned to the Deacons of synagogues.

A. 5. The worship in the primitive churches, though conducted on the same social principles, was probably less conformed to a fixed and established rubric ; for there was not a formal liturgy, and probably no stated lessons of Scripture to be read.

CHAPTER III.

OFFICERS OF THE PRIMITIVE CHURCH. ||

Q. 36. What general classification would you make of the officers in the primitive church ?

A. They may be divided into two classes—officers in the church universal, and officers over single local churches.

Q. 37. -What officers in the primitive churches were of the first class ?

A. The Apostles and their coadjutors, commonly called Evangelists.

Q. 38. What was the Apostolic office, and how did it originate ?

A. The Apostles were those extraordinary officers of the Church Universal, who were instructed and commissioned by Christ himself, to be his immediate legates or ambassadors to all nations, and the authorized publishers and expounders of the Christian religion,

not only to that, but to all subsequent generations; and who were enabled to authenticate their mission by miracles: Matt. xxviii. 18-20. Mark xvi. 15-20. John xv. 15, 16, 18-21, 26, 27. 2 Cor. v. 19, 20.

Q. 39. What official powers did the Apostles possess?

A. They had power to give authoritative expositions of the Christian religion, and to administer all Christian ordinances everywhere. They were also authorized to instruct, exhort, and admonish men of all classes, conditions, and ranks in the church, and out of it; but they had no power to command or to coerce. Their power was only moral or persuasive.

In all their epistles, they state authoritatively what *ought* to be done, and *why*; but they never say, By virtue of my Apostolic office, I command or decree that you do thus and so. On the contrary, after an exposition of Christian duty, they entreat, exhort, admonish, and urge by motives suited to persuade. Thus, 1 Thess. iv. 10-12. Philem. v. 8-10. 1 Cor. chap. v. See also the latter part of all the epistles of Paul. They contain no official decrees, no judicial sentences, but most elaborate counsels, admonitions, and exhortations.

Q. 40. In what relation did the Apostles stand to the local churches?

A. In the relation of founders, fathers, guides, and friends ; but not in that of official rulers and governors. They neither enacted by-laws for them, decided controversies in them, nor executed their commands. They were to the local churches very much what the ancient prophets were to the Jewish Church, not their officers, but the guides of both officers and private members.

Q. 41. Did they divide the world into apostolical provinces, each occupying one as his exclusive charge or field of labor ?

A. No : they made no formal division, but they agreed from time to time in which direction to travel, and among what classes of people each should especially labor. Thus Paul was more the Apostle of the Gentiles, and Peter the Apostle of the Circumcision : Gal. ii. 7, 8, 9. See also 2 Cor. x. 13-16.

Church history has preserved some vague traditions of their separating and going into different fields of labor. Euseb. B. III, Ch. I. Moshien's Institutes, Cent. I., P. I, Ch. IV, Sec. I, 6. Yet we repeatedly find two or more of them present and exercising their office in the same place, and in one instance disagreeing and contending : Gal. ii. 11-13. Acts xv. 6, 13, 22. Their epistles were also addressed, sometimes to the same lo-

cal churches. Thus Peter addressed the Christians scattered throughout "Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia," in all which provinces Paul labored much, planted many churches, and addressed epistles to several of them.

Q. 42. What was the office of the Evangelists?

A. As the twelve Apostles could not personally preach the Gospel everywhere, and nurse adequately all the infant churches till they were able to dispense with foreign aid, they chose the most enlightened and competent of their fellow Christians to be their assistants, their traveling companions, and their envoys to visit and reside temporarily in certain districts of country, in order to instruct the converts more fully and organize them into churches. Besides these immediate coadjutors of the Apostles, many other of the early Christians took upon them the office of public teachers and propagators of Christianity. And they were encouraged by the Apostles in doing so, for in that early age, any private Christian might preach the Gospel and administer its ordinances, without any formal license or consecration to the work.

That unordained men were encouraged to preach the

Gospel, and were useful, is apparent from the history of Apollos, Acts xviii. 24-28, who, being merely a disciple of John the Baptist, but mighty in the Scriptures, when instructed by Aquila and his wife Priscilla, immediately commenced preaching at Ephesus, and was thence recommended to Corinth, where he was so successful a preacher, that Paul says, 1 Cor. iii. 6, "I have planted, APOLLOS watered, but God gave the increase." See Gieseler's Text Book, by Cunningham, vol. i. p. 58, and Coleman's Christian Antiquities, p. 49.

Q. 43. Have the offices of Apostles and Evangelists continued to exist in the Christian church down to modern times?

A. The office of Apostles has not continued, and from the nature of it, could not become permanent. But the office of Evangelists, under different regulations, has existed in all ages; and it still continues in the missionaries to the unevangelized, and in the ministers of the Gospel who labor among the feeble and vacant churches, or who otherwise serve the Church Universal, without having the pastoral care of any local church.

Q. 44. What officers of the second class, or officers of local churches, are recognized in the New Testament?

A. Two distinct orders, namely, Elders and Deacons.

Q. 45. What were the Elders of a local church ?

A. A Board of their most competent men, appointed to take the oversight of the little community, and to manage all its concerns, agreeably to the by-laws of the association.

Q. 46. What evidence have we that they were a Board ?

A. 1. There was a plurality of elders in each church. Acts xiv. 23, and xv. 4, and xx. 17. Titus i. 5. James v. 14. 1 Pet. v. 1.

A. 2. They are always addressed collectively. See Acts xx. 17. Phil. i. 1.

A. 3. We find no intimation of any distinction of rank or power among them.

A. 4. Christian churches were modeled after the form of the Jewish Synagogues, which are acknowledged to have been under the control of a Board of Elders.

If these elders constituted a Board, they would of course need, and doubtless had, a Moderator or Chairman. See Vitringa, de Synag. Vet. Lib. I, Cap. II.

Q. 47. What were their official titles, or designations as officers ?

A. Their most common title is that of Elders ; as in the texts above cited : but they

were also called Bishops or Overseers ; as in Phil. i. 1. Acts xx. 28. 1 Tim. iii. 2. Titus i. 7.

That the titles Bishops and Elders designate one and the same order of church officers in the New Testament, has been so fully shown by various writers, from Jerome A. D. 380 to the present time, that it is unnecessary to repeat the proof. See, for example, Gieseler's Text Book, by Cunningham, vol. i, sec. 29, Note 1 ; and sec. 32, Note 2.

Q. 48. How were the Elders appointed and inducted into office ?

A. They were elected by the brethren of their respective churches, and were solemnly invested with office by prayer and the imposition of hands.

The proofs that local churches appointed their own Elders by election, are :

1. All the designations to office in the local churches described in the New Testament, were by the free choice of the people ; for example, the seven Deacons, Acts vi. 6, and "the brother—chosen of the churches to travel with Paul" to Jerusalem, and carry the contributions to the saints there, 2 Cor. viii. 19. Delegates were also chosen by the church at Antioch, to go to Jerusalem, with Paul and

Barnabas, to the consultation respecting the circumcision of Gentiles, Acts xv. 2. And even a successor to Judas in the Apostleship, was elected in a popular assembly, who chose two men, and then cast lots between them, Acts i. 23-26.

2. The Apostles nowhere claimed controlling power over local churches, or asserted the right to appoint their officers. On the contrary, they treated these churches as bands of brethren, perfectly free and independent, and only took upon themselves to make known to them the will of God.

3. Local churches being altogether voluntary associations, (Ques. 28,) their right to appoint their own officers would follow of course.

4. The principle, that no elder or bishop should be imposed on any church, but that their free consent was necessary, previous to induction, continued during three centuries. See Murdock's Mosheim, Cent. I, P. II, Ch. II, Sec. 6. Coleman's Christian Antiquities, p. 60. Gieseler's Text Book, by Cunningham, vol. i, p. 158. That the ordinary mode of inducting a person into office, or of designating him to any important service in the churches, was by prayer, with fasting, and the laying on of hands,

by the Presbytery or Elders, seems manifest from Acts vi. 6, and xiii. 3, and xiv. 22, 1 Tim. iv. 14.

Q. 49. What were their official powers and duties ?

A. Their official powers were precisely such as the constitution of the churches gave them. They were properly executive officers, and not either legislative or judicial. Their duties were, to preside in all meetings of the body, aid in their deliberations, and execute their decisions ; to see that the by-laws were carried into effect ; and to be ensamples, guides, and counselors to all the brethren.

That such were their powers and duties, appears from the significant titles given them, from the terms which denote their official acts, and from the qualifications which were required in them. They bore the significant titles of Overseers or Bishops, (ἐπίσκοποι,) Acts xx. 28. Philip. i. 1. 1 Tim. iii. 2. Titus i. 7. Of Shepherds or Pastors, ποιμένες, Acts iv. 11. And of Leaders or Presiders, προεσώτες, or δι προΐσταμενοι, 1 Tim. v. 17. Rom. xii. 8. 1 Thes. v. 12. And their official acts were denoted by the expressive terms, to *guard* and *guide*, as a shepherd his flock, ποιμαίνειν, Acts xx. 28. 1 Peter v. 2. To *oversee*, ἐπισκοπεῖν, 1 Peter v. 2. To *take care of*, ἐπιμέλεσθαι, 1 Tim. iii. 5. To *watch*, γρηγορεῖν, Acts xx. 31. To *help or aid the weak*, ἀντιλαμβάνεσθαι, Acts xx. 35.

The qualifications required in an Elder were, not deep learning, theological or secular; not skill and sound judgment in expounding the Scriptures; not popular eloquence or superior talents for public speaking; but solid, consistent piety, an exemplary life, discreteness in all their conduct, and such a weight of character and such wisdom of speech, as would fit them to be the influential or head men in their respective communities. See 1 Tim. iii. 2-7. Titus i. 6-9. See also Neander's *Apostelgeschichte*, I, p. 123, &c.

Q. 50. Was it not their official duty to preach to the congregations, to lead in their public devotions, and to administer the holy sacrament?

A. No. They were not by virtue of their office, the public teachers of religion nor the leaders of the public devotions; but like the Elders in the synagogue, they presided over the worship and the reading and exposition of the Scriptures in the Christian assemblies. At the same time they had the right, as individuals, to take an active part in public worship, so far as they saw fit, and as seemed to meet the wants and wishes of the congregation. And as they were the most intelligent and influential men in their respective bodies, we may suppose, that ordinarily they were the chief speakers in the worshiping assemblies,

except when an Apostle or Evangelist, or some one having extraordinary spiritual gifts, was present.

That all male persons had the right of speaking in the assemblies of the early Christians, and that the privilege was sometimes abused, seems to be clearly represented in 1 Cor. xiv. 23-37. The right would also be inferable from the practice of the synagogue, after which the first Christian churches copied. See Ques. 34, 35. See also Gieseler's Text Book, by Cunningham, I, p. 58. Neander's Apostelgeschichte, I, pp. 30, &c. 127, &c. Coleman's Christian Antiquities, p. 49.

The fact that the religious services of the Primitive Christian assemblies were performed by the brethren, without distinction, shows that those services were not considered the *official* work of the elders, Heb. x. 25. Still, those elders who were distinguished for their labors in "word and doctrine," deserved the highest consideration for their peculiar exertions and usefulness, 1 Tim. v. 17. And it was a matter of importance in selecting persons for this office, that men well qualified to teach should be chosen, rather than those who would not turn their official influence to so good an account, and who would be less able to silence the cavils of the enemies of Christianity, 1 Tim. iii. 2.

Q. 51. What were the functions of Deacons in the early churches?

A. They seem to have been assistants to the Elders, or the public servants of the churches. They acted as messengers and envoys, aided

in keeping order in the public assemblies, assisted in the administration of ordinances, and in the collection and distribution of the public alms, and under the direction of the elders, performed various minor pastoral duties.

The Scriptures, indeed, afford us but little direct information respecting their functions. The word Deacon properly denotes one who serves: but it is used with great latitude in the New Testament. The seven Deacons mentioned in Acts vi. 1-6, were appointed for a special purpose; and we ought not to limit the permanent office to the single duty of those special officers. If we consider the qualifications for the office of a Deacon, in 1 Tim. iii. 8, 13, we shall see that very nearly the same qualifications were required in Deacons as in Elders: from which we may infer that their duties could not have been of a totally different nature. Besides, it seems to be intimated in v. 13, that the office of Deacon was often a stepping stone to the office of Elder.

Q. 52. Who were the Prophets and the men of spiritual gifts, in the Apostolic age, and what were their functions?

A. Inspiration and miraculous powers were, in those times, conferred not only on the twelve Apostles, but also, in a lower degree, on the Evangelists and teachers, and on other eminent Christians, for the edification of the church, and for the confirmation of the Christian doc-

trine : and all these special divine influences were called spiritual gifts, *χαρίσματα πνευματικά*, because they proceeded from the Holy Spirit, working in those who possessed them.

These gifts were, undoubtedly, of inestimable value to the nascent churches : but as they have long since ceased to exist, (their place being supplied by the New Testament Scriptures, and by an educated Christian ministry,) we cannot expect to obtain very distinct conceptions of their various phases and operations. It appears that they were imparted as quite an ordinary thing, by the Apostles to their baptized fellow Christians, by prayer and the imposition of hands, Acts viii. 15-19, x. 44-47, xi. 15-17, xix. 6. 2 Tim. i. 6. Heb. ii. 4.

Concerning these spiritual gifts, their variety, their distribution, their uses, and their procedure from the Holy Spirit, Paul discourses at large, in his first Epistle to the Corinthians, chap. xii. It would seem, from his account, that they were shared in some measure or degree, by nearly all true believers in Christ, vs. 7, 11, 12, &c., and that by means of them the church universal became like an organic living body, composed of many members, each fitted for some office or function beneficial to the whole. But all these possessors of spiritual gifts could not have been office-bearers in the churches ; for we cannot suppose so great a number and variety of public officers as there were of spiritual gifts. Besides, the Apostle himself, v. 12, &c., clearly intimates, that all the possessors of such gifts were not clothed with official power over the body ; neither should they aspire to be, but should be content with filling the sphere allotted to

them: see also Rom. xii, 3-8. There is another passage, Eph. iv. 11, 12, in which Paul has been supposed to enumerate the proper church officers instituted by Christ himself. But the passage seems rather to enumerate the principal functionaries, whether officers or not officers, by whom the Gospel dispensation was made efficient in its first promulgation.

Q. 53. What was the nature and form of *Ordination* in the Apostolic times?

A. Ordination was simply induction into office, or the installment of an officer elect: and it consisted in the devout worship of God, with fasting and prayer, and the imposition of hands, Acts vi. 6, xiii. 3.

That ordination in the apostolic times was not a proper *consecration*, like that of Aaron and his sons to the priesthood, or like that of the Christian clergy in after ages, appears from the terms by which it is expressed. The appropriate terms for consecration, as applied to Aaronic priests, and to later Christian priests, were *τελείωσις* and *τελειόω*. See the Sept. Ex. xxix. 10, 22, 26, 27, 29, 31, 33, 34, 35; and elsewhere, often: also Suicer's Thesaur. Eccles. II, p. 1261: and compare Heb. vii. 28. But neither of these terms is ever used in the New Testament to denote the ordination of church officers. The words used for this purpose are, *χειροτονέω*, to elect or to appoint, Acts xiv. 23—*καθίστημι*, to establish, to set up, Titus i. 5—and *τίθημι*, to constitute, 1 Tim. ii. 7. And neither of these words in their strict

and proper sense imports any thing more than a simple appointment to office, or an installment in office. See Suicer's Thesaur. Eccles. II, p. 1512, &c., and Schleusner's Greek Lexicon.

Q. 54. Did ordination convey to the person official powers, which he could not otherwise possess?

A. No. The ordination was rather a recognition of him as one already clothed with official powers, by virtue of his previous election or appointment to office. He must necessarily enter on his official duties at some particular time, and it was very suitable to mark that occasion by devoutly commending him to God, in a public assembly, and by supplicating the divine blessing on his official life.

Q. 55. Were the Apostles and Evangelists and all the officers of local churches thus ordained?

A. We have no evidence that they were; for in the New Testament, so little importance is given to ordinations, that no precept is recorded requiring them, and they are seldom mentioned, and then only casually.

We have no account of the ordination of any one of the Apostles or Evangelists, previous to his entering on his office. Indeed, the only ordination of individuals

mentioned in the New Testament are, (1.) that of the seven Deacons, Acts vi. 6, (2.) that of Paul and Barnabas by the church at Antioch, when about to commence their missionary tour, Acts xiii. 2, 3, and (3.) that of 1 Timothy iv. 14, where Paul speaks of the gifts that Timothy had received by the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery and of Paul himself, 1 Tim. iv. 14. 2 Tim. i. 6. Besides these particular ordinations, we have general notices of the ordinations of Elders in every church or city, Acts xiv. 23. Titus 1. 5.

Q. 56. Who had the power of ordaining officers in the primitive church?

A. Those, doubtless, who had the power of electing or appointing such officers; provided they were competent to conduct the solemn exercises in a proper manner.

But the new formed churches would, of course, wish to have the presence and assistance of an Apostle or Evangelist, to perform for them the solemn services, and to point out the duties both of the officers and those over whom they were placed. And in the older churches, the presence and aid of neighboring church officers and brethren would naturally be desired; and would greatly tend to strengthen the ties of fellowship and fraternal feeling among contiguous churches.

Q. 57. Did the officers of the primitive church, by virtue of their ordination, become a *distinct order* of men from the people,

such as the Jewish Priests, and such as the *Clergy* of the Christian church, in subsequent ages?

A. No. They did not become a distinct *order* of men, clothed with a peculiar sanctity in the household of faith; but were merely the brethren charged with certain duties, and invested with certain powers, for the common good of the church.

See, on this fundamental point, Neander's *Kirchengeschichte*, vol. i, p. 276, &c., 299, 300.. Gieseler's Text Book, by Cunningham, vol. i, sec. 29, p. 58. Henke's *Kirchengesch.* vol. i, sec. 13, p. 72, &c. G. J. Plank's *Gesch. der chrishl. kirchl. Gesellschafts-Verfassung*, Jahr 68–300, ch. x., vol. i, 149, &c., and Coleman's *Christian Antiqq.*, p. 66, 67.

Both the Jewish Levitical Law and the Pagan religions recognized a holy order of Priests—consecrated persons, standing in nearer relations to the Deity than other men; and who alone could perform certain religious acts, in a manner acceptable to God and profitable to the people. But primitive Christianity acknowledged only one *Priest*, the Lord Jesus Christ; through whom *all* believers may draw near to God, and make known their wants and present their sacrifices of praise. These fundamental principles were everywhere inculcated by Christ himself, and by all his Apostles.

But in the next age after the Apostles, the Christian Churches began to copy after the nations around them; and very soon the officers of the churches claimed to be a *Christian Clergy*, made so by their *Ordination*, and possessing important powers and prerogatives, which they received directly from Christ through the hands of his Apostles and ministers. And thenceforth *Ordination* became an awful and mysterious transaction, which none but consecrated hands could validly perform, and which, when so performed, transformed a Christian brother into a clergyman, a holy man, a priest of God, or at least, a competent dispenser of the sacraments, and an authorized ruler and teacher in the church. (See *Planck*, ubi supra, p. 159, &c.)

CHAPTER IV.

CHANGES IN THE ORGANIZATION AND GOVERNMENT OF THE CHURCHES AFTER THE APOSTOLIC AGE.

Q. 58. Did the primitive churches retain, for a long time, their original form and organization ?

A. No. Changes began to be made as soon as the Apostles were gone, and change after change succeeded, till gradually the whole system of church order was subverted.

Q. 59. Are we able to trace accurately the commencement and the progress of all these changes ?

A. We are not ; because the history of the church is nearly a blank for about a century after the Apostles, and it affords but scanty information for a much longer period.

The writings of the Apostolic Fathers are meagre performances, and, with the exception of the first epistle of Clemens Romanus, are of very questionable au-

thenticity. The writer next after them is Justin Martyr, who lived about the middle of the second century. He was followed by the other Apologists, and by Irenæus and Clemens Alexandrinus, who close the list of Christian writers in the second century. Now, of all these writers of the two first centuries, not one has attempted any regular delineation of the constitution and order of the Christian Churches in his day; and it is only on a few occasions that they incidentally drop some remarks bearing on the subject. And when we come to the more voluminous writers of the third century, who give us a fuller view of the churches in their age, we find that very great changes had already been made, of the reality of which, and of their origin and causes, these writers had very inadequate conceptions.

Q. 60. What was, probably, the first important change in the form and order of the primitive churches?

A. The several churches began to have their appropriate religious teachers, who resided constantly among them, presided in their assemblies for worship, taught and instructed the people, administered the sacraments, offered up the public prayers, and were at the head of the board of Elders in each church.

This important and salutary change would naturally occur in the progress of events. For, by continued practice and study, prominent individuals would grad-

ually acquire talents for teaching and ministering in holy things superior to those of their brethren : and as the Spiritual Gifts, doubtless, gradually ceased when the Christian Scriptures became known, and as study and reflection supplied the place of supernatural enlightenment, these brethren would of course become the chief speakers in the public assemblies of their respective churches, or would come to perform regularly and constantly much the same services as had been performed by the Apostles and Evangelists when occasionally present. They would indeed become a sort of permanent and stationary successors to the itinerant Apostles and Evangelists. That is, they would become, in the language of modern times, the regular pastors and teachers of their respective churches ; yet without excluding the other brethren, and especially the Elders, from the occasional exercise of their gifts.

These proper teachers and pastors of individual churches were, doubtless, many of them persons who had acquired their knowledge and talents for the ministry, while filling the offices of Deacon first, and then of Elder. And if so, they would be already clothed with the office of Elder, at the time they became official teachers. And if they had other training, or had come from other churches, they would, doubtless, at once be elected to the office of Elder. And being Elders, and the principal functionaries in their churches, as well as the most enlightened and most eloquent members of their boards, they would of course become the most active and influential men in the board of Elders. They would be made the standing Moderators, as well as the chief executive officers of those boards ; and the other

Elders, by yielding deference to their opinions, and relying upon their wisdom and powers of execution, would gradually come to leave most things to their discretion, or would themselves become little more than the official advisers, or the privy council of these exclusive pastors and teachers. And when this became the state of things, the official titles, *Bishop* and *Presbyter*, common to all members of the board, would have a higher import, when applied to them; and in process of time might become appropriated to them exclusively, as seems to have been the fact near the close of the second century.

The earliest intimation of the existence of such an order of officers in local churches, is, perhaps, near the end of the first century, in the superscriptions of the Apocryphical epistles to the *Angels* of the seven churches of Proconsular Asia. Such official teachers of single churches may, for a time, have been called the *Angels* of their churches, in allusion to the title *Angels of the Congregation*, in the Jewish Synagogues. (See the answer to Ques. 31.) But against so early a rise of this class of officers, the authority of *Clemens Romanus* seems to militate; for he represents the church of Corinth, about the year 96, as having only *two* kinds of officers, namely, a *company of Elders* or *Bishops*, and a number of *Deacons*; and he reproves the Corinthians for having factiously displaced *some* of their *Elders*, when they had done nothing censurable. (See his epist. I. ad Corinth, § 42, 44, 47, 54, 57.) *Justin Martyr*, however, about fifty years later, very distinctly mentions a church officer, whom he calls the *President*, (ὁ πρὸς ὧς,) who instructed the people every Sunday, of-

ferred the prayers, blessed the Sacramental bread and was the head and leader of the whole Christian worship. (See his *Apol. II*, p. 97, 98, ed. Paris, 1636.

Q. 61. What was the next step of departure from the form and order of the primitive churches ?

A. The ecclesiastical functionaries gradually imbibed the idea, that their offices were of divine appointment ; that the powers and prerogatives they possessed, did not come to them from their churches, but directly from Christ through a canonical ordination ; that they, of course, constituted a proper clergy, a higher and holier order of persons than the laity ; and that, by divine right, it belonged to them, and to those delegated by them, to rule and govern the church, to admit and exclude members, to preach and instruct the people, to administer the sacraments, and to conduct on all occasions the public worship of God.

These ideas only glimmer faintly in the unadulterated writings of the second century ; but in the third and fourth centuries, especially in the latter, they stand out in bold relief in the writings of various ecclesiastics, and in the acts of the synods or councils.

This supposed divine right of Clergymen only, to bear rule in the churches, and to officiate in holy things, is the radical principle of that High Churchism, which still prevails among various denominations of Christians. For it is, comparatively, of little importance how many grades of church officers we admit, or what distribution of power exists among them, provided they are allowed to grasp and to wield all ecclesiastical power, so that the laity have no authority in sacred things, but are subjected to the absolute authority of their spiritual lords.

Q. 62. What simultaneous change occurred in regard to the supposed nature and efficacy of religious rites and ordinances ?

A. As the ministers of religion were supposed to have a divine commission, so all their official acts and administrations were supposed to be accompanied by a mysterious divine efficacy. And hence, all religious rites and ordinances, instead of being regarded merely as the appointed mediums of worship, acceptable to God and profitable to men so far as they were attended with right views and feelings in the worshiper, came to be regarded with reverence for their own sake, and to be relied upon as the direct and proper mediums of sanctification. For they were regarded as either the channels through which God causes his grace

to flow, or as having in themselves a mysterious efficacy, and, in either case, as transforming the character and changing the state of all those to whom they were duly administered.

Thus *Christian Baptism* became, either itself *regeneration*, or the appointed *channel* of the regenerating grace of God ; and thus, in either way, it would be the infallible medium of regeneration, and the door of salvation to sinful man. In like manner, the Eucharist, if consecrated by one duly authorized, was an appointed and efficient means for sanctifying the heart. So also the *official blessing* of a clergyman duly ordained, was efficacious before God, and insured the divine favor to the persons on whom it was bestowed. The canonical clergy, moreover, could give a valid Absolution to sinners, on certain conditions ; or they could withhold such Absolution, and thereby endanger their eternal salvation. Even the church buildings, and their vessels and furniture, when duly consecrated by these ministers of God, acquired such a sanctity, that it was sacrilege to use them for any worldly purpose whatever. Moreover, the sign of the cross, and holy water, and lighted candles, and the smoke of incense, and other sacred ceremonies and objects, were supposed to be of essential benefit to the souls and bodies of men, when used with due reverence and according to the established ritual. But it was canonical ordination, or the consecration of church officers, by such as had received consecration in a direct line from the Apostles, which was supposed to have the most potent and mysterious efficacy. It trans-

formed a common Christian into a Clergyman, a holy man of God, and invested him permanently and forever with all the wonderful powers and prerogatives attributed to these vicegerents of God.

Q. 63. What change in the condition of the laity, grew out of these high church principles?

A. When these principles became fully developed, the condition of the laity was totally changed. For they lost all their sacred rights and privileges as members of a fraternity, or a voluntary association of brethren, and sunk into a state of complete and absolute dependence on the clergy.

The door of admission to church membership could be opened only by the priests. And they allowed no one to enter, till he had passed a long period of probation and instruction in the character of a Catechumen; nor even then, without sponsors or God-fathers to give bonds for him. When admitted into the church, the laity held all their privileges at the pleasure of the priests. In the public worship—as in that of the Jewish temple—the priests stood between the people and the Deity. The priests alone could approach the altar, offer the public prayer and praise, explain the scriptures, instruct and exhort the people, and administer the holy ordinances. Through them alone, as the channels of intercourse, could the laity commune publicly with their

Maker and Redeemer in any divine ordinance, or obtain from it the precious benefits which it was intended to convey to men. In the discipline of the church, and in the management of all its temporal concerns, the laity were no longer the citizens of a free republic, having a voice in the enactment of its laws and in the regulation of both its external and internal affairs. For all ecclesiastical constitutions and laws were supposed to be either enactments of Jesus Christ himself, or the decrees and decisions of his divinely appointed, and divinely guided, vicegerents; and therefore they were all held to be so sacred, that no layman might question their wisdom, or even presume to interpret them according to his own discretion. The condition of laymen in the church was like that of minor children in a household, who have no voice in the regulation and government of the family, no control of its property, no disposal of any thing that belongs to it. Their duties and obligations as church members, were all included in perfect submission, profound reverence, and implicit obedience to those whom God had constituted their spiritual guardians and guides.

Q. 64. What was the origin of the Episcopal Hierarchy, with three orders of Clergy, in the Christian Church?

A. The introduction of stated teachers of local churches, as described under the 60th question, and the gradual transfer to them of the principal functions both of worship and government, produced in the end three kinds

of officers in each church, viz: the Pastor or Bishop, just described, the other Presbyters who were his counselors and assistants, and the Deacons who were the public servants of the church. And when these officers came to be regarded as a proper *clergy*—an order of consecrated men, and their offices were considered as of divine institution, (see Quest. 61,) they very naturally began to compare themselves with the Levitical clergy of the Mosaic dispensation; and, about the year A. D. 200, the splendid titles of Highpriest, Priest, and Levites, were actually applied to them: and at length, it was explicitly maintained that, by divine appointment, the churches connected with the mother church of each city should form, in connection with it, a diocese, and be furnished with a bishop and a number of priests and deacons, constituting a complete episcopal hierarchy.

It is not difficult to conceive how, in the progress of things, such a radical change in the constitution of the churches might take place. For when the Christians in a large city, (e. g. Jerusalem, Rome, Corinth, &c.) became too numerous to assemble conveniently in one house, they would be compelled to meet separately in different places; and yet they would wish to be consid-

ered but *one* church or fraternity, and to have one principal Pastor or Bishop, with several assistants to supply the different meetings. This arrangement would afford opportunity for the presbyters and even for the Deacons, to be much employed in ministering to the different congregations, under the direction and supervision of the chief Pastor or Bishop, who might assign them their places of labor from week to week, or appoint them to be stated preachers in the several places of worship. And this arrangement might extend to the immediate suburbs of the city, while the several districts more remote, to which the city presbyters could not conveniently minister, might form distinct congregations, with either local presbyters, or dependent rural Bishops, (χωρεπίσκοποι,) for their pastors, but still under the supervision of the city Bishop. And when Christianity became established in any of the smaller cities, and a church with the usual officers was instituted, the same process would there go forward, as in the larger cities; and thus the whole country would become divided into dioceses, with diocesan Bishops, numerous presbyters, and preaching Deacons.

Now when this diocesan form of churches became quite common, as we suppose it did as early as the second century, nothing would be wanting to the complete establishment of an episcopal hierarchy, but for the various classes of Christian ministers to arrogate to themselves, and the people to accord to them, the character of a proper *Clergy* by divine appointment, distributed into three orders, after the pattern of the Levitical priesthood, and deriving their authority from Christ through the medium of a canonical ordination. And if

we consider how readily all religious customs and usages acquire sanctity by age, how prone men are to attribute holiness both to persons and things in any way connected with religious worship, and how natural it is for all classes of men to improve every fair opportunity for extending their own power and influence; and if we recollect also, that the people of that age were utter strangers to free constitutions of government in church or state, or were accustomed to arbitrary power in all public officers, whether civil or religious; and that all the Pagan nations, as well as the Jews, regarded *their* respective priests as a proper *clergy*, a holy order of persons, invested with powers which no others could possess, powers which they derived from the mysterious rites used in their consecration; we need not, in view of all these circumstances, regard it as a strange thing, and proof of degenerate piety and unholy ambition in the Christian ministry, if they, under the influence of such causes, gradually swerved from the principles of the apostolic churches, and became at last a complete hierarchy.

The principles here stated will account for the occasional mention of Bishops, Presbyters, and Deacons, as three distinct classes of church officers, in the last half of the second century, and before the earliest notice of the hierarchy. For, we may suppose, three grades of church officers actually existed in the church, from the very next age after the Apostles. And hence, if the existing epistles of Ignatius bear marks of a later age than the reign of Trajan, it is not so much by their maintaining three distinct grades of church officers, Bishops, Presbyters, and Deacons, at the time he wrote, as by at-

tributing to them a higher elevation above the people, and greater authority in the churches, than belongs to so early an age, or than can be found in any other writer till near a century later.

These principles moreover show, that the episcopal hierarchy was of gradual and slow growth. It did not start into being at once, producing a sudden and violent revolution, like those by which civil republics are sometimes overturned and divested of their liberties. The powers originally inherent in the Christian churches were so gradually transferred to the officers, that, neither the ministers nor the people were conscious of the change. Hence it is, that the writers of the early ages are so silent on the whole subject ; and hence, too, the modern writers on church government have very generally agreed that Jesus Christ himself, or his Apostles, established from the beginning a *hierarchy* of some sort, i. e. a *dominion over sacred things*, in the persons of church officers ; and they have disagreed and contended only about the *form* of this hierarchy ; namely, whether it was *Papal*, in the line of St. Peter and his successors ; or *Prelatical*, in a succession of diocesan Bishops, Priests, and Deacons ; or *Presbyterial*, in local Pastors with ruling Elders, arranged in a gradation of ecclesiastical courts ; or *Congregational*, in the settled Pastors of independent churches, with advisory councils. For all these forms of hierarchy recognize a real *Clergy*, created by consecration, and by divine right exercising a *dominion* more or less complete *over sacred things*. But, according to the principles we maintain, there was no hierarchy of any kind set up by the Apostles ; nor

did any exist, till about the commencement of the *third* century.

From an inspection of the ecclesiastical writers of those times, it will appear, that the churches were gradually surrendering their power, more and more, to their religious teachers, during the whole of the *second* century; and that those teachers felt, more and more, their elevation above the people, and their independence of all human responsibilities. Yet it was not till the beginning of the *third* century, that these teachers claimed to be a proper *Clergy*, a holy order of men divinely appointed to guide and govern the churches, and traced their official powers to their regular ordination. Nor till then, did they hold themselves to be Highpriests, Priests, and Levites in the Christian church, to whom belonged by divine right the various prerogatives of the Levitical priesthood. And it was not till far into the *fourth* century, that the prelatical hierarchy attained full maturity. The Papal hierarchy, which succeeded the Episcopal, is generally supposed by Protestants to have commenced sometime in the *seventh* century, and to have attained its complete development about the *twelfth* century.

That the ecclesiastical polity first became a hierarchy about the year 200, may be inferred from the following historical facts:

1. Anterior to that period, the Fathers never use the terms *Clergy* and *Clergymen*, *Laity* and *Laymen*, as designating different classes of men in the church; nor do they anywhere describe the *thing* intended by these terms, under other and equivalent expressions. On the

contrary, Tertullian, Origen, Cyprian, and all the Fathers after A. D. 200, often speak of a high and privileged order of men in the church, whom they not only call Bishops, Presbyters, Deacons, &c., but also denominate the *Clergy* or *Clergymen*, (in Greek, κληρος and κληρικῶν, in Latin, *Clerus* and *Clerici*,) in distinction from common Christians, whom they style *Laymen* and the *Laity*, (in Greek, λαϊκοί and λαός, in Latin, *Laici* and *Plebs*.) Joseph Bingham (in his *Antiqq.*, Eccles. B. I, ch. 5) attempts, indeed, to prove, (against Nic. Rigaltius, Cl. Salmasius, and Jo. Selden,) that the distinction between Clergymen and Laymen existed from the very first institution of churches. But his proof is a complete failure. He is able to find the term *Laymen* once only, in the early Fathers ; namely, in Clemens, Rom. I, Ep. ch. 40, where it refers exclusively to the Levitical institutions, and of course is nothing to his purpose. And the word *Clergy* he also finds once, in a passage of Clemens Alex. (*Quis dives salvetur*,) where it certainly does refer to Christian ministers. But that work of Clement was undoubtedly written *after the year 200*, being a later work than his *Stromata*, which were composed some time in the reign of Severus.

2. The Fathers prior to Tertullian seldom speak of the *ordination* of church officers, and never in terms showing that much importance was attached to it. They never call it a *consecration* ; nor do they intimate that it conveys official power and rank in the church. On the contrary, Tertullian, Origen, Cyprian, &c., speak of ordination as a most important thing, and as being that which makes a man a Clergymen, or raises him from one order among the Clergy to another. Ter-

tullian, moreover, (de Praescript., c. 41,) charges it upon the Heretics, that they allowed *their* church officers to take up and lay down their offices, according to their convenience; thus disregarding the sanctity of ordination. Jerome brings the same charge against them. How little importance, on the other hand, Clemens Alexandrinus attached to ordination, appears from his placing every private Christian of enlarged knowledge and exemplary life, though not ordained, upon a par with Presbyters in the church. (Strom. vi. p. 793, al. 667.) Having stated that Matthias was elected to succeed Judas in the Apostleship, because he was found worthy, Clement goes on to say: "It is therefore lawful, now, to enroll in the company of Apostles those who are well versed in the commands of the Lord, and live perfectly and intelligently according to the Gospel. A man is in reality a *Presbyter of the church*, and a *true Minister of the kingdom of God*, if he do and teach the things of the Lord, even though not *ordained* (*χειροτονούμενος, elected, appointed*) by men: nor because he is [officially] a Presbyter, is he accounted a righteous man, but because he is righteous, he is enrolled a Presbyter; and, although here on earth he may not be honored with the highest seat, he will sit on the four and twenty thrones judging the people: as John speaks in the Apocalypse."

3. Not one of the Fathers, before Tertullian, ever calls the Bishops and Presbyters, *Priests*, or the Deacons, *Levites*; except in the sense in which all Christians are Priests, agreeably to 1 Peter ii. 9. (Ye are a chosen generation, a royal *priesthood*, &c.) See Justin Martyr, Dial. p. 344, ed. 1636: Irenæus, Haer. iv. c. 20: Clemens Alex. Strom. iv. p. 635, al. 537. They

never represent the Ministers of the New Testament as holding the same relation to the Christian Church, as the Levitical priests held to the Jewish Church. They do not claim for the former the prerogatives, powers, and immunities of the Jewish priesthood ; nor do they apply the Levitical laws to Christian Ministers, as if they were obligatory in regard to them. But Tertullian and the Fathers that succeeded him, do all these things. Thus Tertullian (de Bapt. c. 17) says: *Jus habit summus Sacerdos, qui est Episcopus.* And in Cyprian, the words *Sacerdos* and *Sacerdotium* are of perpetual occurrence, applied to Bishops and Presbyters, and to their official duties. And Jerome (contra Lucifer. To. II. p. 145) says: *Ecclesia non est, quae non habit sacerdotes.* He also (Ep. 27) calls the Deacons *Levites*. The application of the Levitical law to the Christian ministry, as defining its powers and prerogatives, may be seen everywhere in Cyprian: e. g. Epp., 55, and 64, and 66, and 68, and 76, &c.

Q. 67. What were the inferior orders of the Clergy, and when were they introduced ?

A. They were those below the order of Deacons ; namely, Sub-deacons, Acolythists, Exorcists, Lectors, Janitors, &c. The earliest mention of these orders is, by Cyprian and his contemporary, Cornelius of Rome, about the middle of the third century. See Cyprian, Epp. viii., xx., xxix., xxxiv., xxxv., xlv., lxxviii., lxxix., ed. Potter ; Cornelius, Ep. apud Euseb.

H. E. Lib. vi. c. 43 : and Bingham. Antiqq., Eccl. B. III.

The idea prevailed, especially in the Western churches, that as the church of Jerusalem chose only *seven* Deacons, (Acts vi. 3, 5,) there should be no more than seven in any one church. Hence, when the churches in the larger cities became very numerous and were divided into several congregations, seven Deacons were found inadequate to the discharge of all their duties, and assistants were assigned them. This is supposed to be the origin of the inferior orders, who in fact performed the humbler duties of the Diaconate. They appear first in the large churches, (e. g. Rome, Carthage, &c. ;) and, it is said, were wanting in some of the smaller churches as late as the fourth, and even the fifth century. Nor were these orders the same in all churches. Some had more than *five* orders, and others less: their titles and duties, also, varied. These orders, we are told, were a sort of school, in which young men were trained for the higher orders. They undoubtedly served to increase the pomp of worship, to elevate the dignity of the higher orders, and to gratify the aspirings of ambitious laymen, who wished to participate in the honors and emoluments of the Clergy. As early as the latter part of the fourth century, some of them at least were ordained, though without imposition of hands, and could not afterwards return to the rank of Laymen.

Q. 68. What was the origin of Archbishops or Metropolitans, and of Primates and Patriarchs ?

A. Metropolitans originated from the establishment of Provincial Synods or Councils, about the beginning of the *third* century.—Primates and Patriarchs were first established in the *fourth* century, under the Christian Emperors.

The first church founded in any country or province, would naturally be established in its metropolis. And hence the Metropolitan churches were generally the oldest, the largest, the most wealthy, and composed of the best informed Christians, in their respective countries. And the pastors of these churches would of course be distinguished men, and would be treated with deference by the ministers of the younger and smaller churches of their provinces. In the latter part of the *second* century, ecclesiastical councils began to be held for the settling of difficult questions. (See Euseb. H. E. Lib. v. c. 16 and 23-25.) Most of these councils assembled at the request of the pastors or bishops of Metropolitan churches, who took a leading part in the debates, and generally drew up the results and published them to the world. Near the close of the *second* century, or early in the *third*, annual or semi-annual provincial councils were also established over the greater part of the Roman empire. (See Mosheim, Cent. II, P. II, ch. II, § 2, ed. Murdock, vol. i, p. 16, n. (2).) And in these provincial councils, (except in five out of six provinces of Africa, in which the senior bishop always presided,) the Bishop of the Metropolitan church was the standing Moderator, with power to call special meetings. He also kept the

records of the Council, as well as the documents of the ordination of all Bishops. His powers, at that period, seem to have been very similar to those of the Moderators of Presbyteries among the Scotch and American Presbyterians, or those of the Moderators of Consociations in some parts of New England. Such were the Metropolitans of the *third* century. Afterwards their powers were much enlarged; for they had jurisdiction over their suffragan Bishops, and appellate jurisdiction in all ecclesiastical causes in their respective provinces.

In the *fourth* century, when Christianity became the established religion of the Roman empire, the government of the churches was regulated very much after the form of the civil government. (See Mosheim, Cent. IV, P. II, ch. II, § 3, vol. i, p. 232, n. (2).) Subsequently, the great Patriarchs of Rome, Constantinople, Antioch, Jerusalem, and Alexandria, who had before been the most prominent Metropolitans, were clothed with ecclesiastical authority over their patriarchates; and the Exarchs or Primates of certain countries took rank and received power, above those of simple Metropolitans, but inferior to that of the Patriarchs.

Q. 69. When and how was the original independence of local churches subverted?

A. The independence of single churches was undermined and subverted in the *third* and *fourth* centuries, by the introduction of ecclesiastical councils with legislative and judicial powers.

If—as we have stated—the Christians in each city or

town, however numerous they might become, always remained but one community or church, and, although obliged to meet in separate bodies for ordinary worship, always assembled as one body for the transaction of business, and had one set of church officers, with a chief Pastor or Bishop, to superintend their affairs; and if these complex bodies, during the *second* and *third* centuries, gradually surrendered their powers of self-government, and submitted to be ruled entirely by their Ministers, who claimed to be a proper *Clergy* by divine right; then there could no longer be any independence of churches, except the independence of these complex bodies of each other. And this independence, which seems to have been complete during the greater part of the *second* century, was afterwards gradually subverted by the establishment of Provincial and General Councils, with power to frame ecclesiastical Canons, binding upon all the bodies under their jurisdiction. For these Canons were multiplied and extended, from time to time, till they reached every part of both discipline and worship; and, by instituting the right of appeal in all cases, from single churches to higher tribunals, they made even the Bishops little more than the executive officers of the statutes enacted for them by a supposed higher authority.

Q. 70. What was the origin of liturgies or written forms of worship among Christians?

A. For three centuries, written formulas of worship were unknown among Christians. But after the full establishment of the Episcopal

hierarchy, in the reign of Constantine, and the erection of splendid churches, with large revenues, in order to render the public worship more imposing, and to secure greater uniformity and a more perfect conformity to the mandates of the Bishops, some of the prelates drew up forms of prayer and ceremonials of worship, in accordance with what they considered the best models, and imposed them on their own dioceses, and recommended them to others. How many such liturgical works were originally drawn up, and by whom, cannot now be ascertained. We only know that they originated in this age, that they were soon brought into general use, and that although each bishop had the right to prescribe forms of worship in his own diocese, yet each grand division of the empire had very much the same liturgy. The canon of the Mass or the proper communion service, was indeed nearly the same in all countries; while the Missa Catechumenorum, or the prayers and offices which preceded the Mass, were widely different.

Most of the earlier liturgies bore the names of certain Apostles, who, it was supposed, established those particular forms of worship, in the countries where they labored, which were handed down orally till the fourth

century, and then were committed to writing. The first written liturgy of Palestine and Syria, was called the *Liturgy of St. James*, who was accounted the first Bishop of Jerusalem. The liturgy of Egypt and the adjacent countries, was named after *St. Mark*, the reputed first Bishop of Alexandria. The old Liturgy of Italy and Rome, was ascribed to *St. Peter*, who, it was supposed, presided over the Romish See. Some also tell us of a Liturgy of the *Apostle John*, which was originally used at Ephesus, and was thence carried to the Grecian colonies at Marseilles, Lyons, and Vienne, from whence it was propagated over Gaul, Britain, and perhaps Spain. But the Liturgy which prevailed in Asia Minor, Constantinople, and Greece, in the fifth and following centuries, was the Liturgy of St. James, which is said to have been revised and improved by Basil of Cappadocia, and by Chrysostom. This same oriental Liturgy, in some or other of its recensions, is the basis of the modern Russian, the Melchite and Jacobite Greek, the Armenian and Nestorian Liturgies, and of one form of the Coptic. The Romish Liturgy, or that of St. Peter, was revised in the fifth century by Leo the Great, and in the sixth by Gelasius and Gregory the Great, the latter of whom introduced the Gregorian or plain chant. The succeeding Roman pontiffs enlarged and modified it, from time to time, and made great efforts to extend its use over all the countries subject to the papal authority; and from about the eighth or ninth century, quite down to the Reformation, scarcely any other was used throughout papal Europe. The Liturgy of the Protestant Episcopal Church, in Great Britain and America, is based on this Romish Liturgy, but with very great alterations and

improvements, derived in part from the ancient Liturgies, and in part from the lucubrations of the Reformers.

There is another ancient Liturgy, in the eighth book of the spurious work called the Apostolic Constitutions, falsely ascribed to Clemens Romanus. But there is no reason to believe that it was ever adopted and used by any church whatever. It is therefore of no importance to our inquiries, except as casting some light on the origin of written Liturgies. It is agreed among the learned, that this is one of the earliest, and perhaps *the* earliest written Liturgy of which we have any knowledge. It bears the marks of an Arian hand, and is supposed to have been produced some time in the fourth century;—some think it may have been written near the end of the third century.

The ablest writers on Liturgies, both in the Romish Church and in the English Episcopal, have long been agreed, that the so called Apostolic Liturgies are not genuine, that neither the Apostles nor their assistants furnished the churches with written formulas of worship, and that written Liturgies were not known in the Christian church, till some time in the fourth century. The proofs they allege, are : (1.) That if the Apostles or Evangelists had supplied the churches with written Liturgies, those Liturgies would have been added to the canon of Holy Scripture, would have been preserved as carefully and with as little alteration as the Gospels or Epistles, and would have been as often cited and referred to in the contests with heretics and schismatics. (2.) That, if the churches had possessed and used such Liturgies for 300 years, it is utterly unaccountable that no ecclesiastical writer should either mention, cite, or

even allude to them, during that long period: (3.) That Basil the Great, about the year 374, (*de Spiritu Sancto*, c. 27. *Opp. T. III*, p. 53, ed. Bened.) expressly declares, that no one of the holy men, up to his time, had set forth any written formulas of prayer to be used in the celebration of the Eucharist: τὰ τῆς ἐπικλήσεως ῥήματα, τίς τῶν ἁγίων ἐγγράφως ἡμῖν καταλέλοιπεν. These arguments are deemed perfectly conclusive against written Liturgies, anterior to the fourth century.—

But, say the Romanists and the English Episcopalians, it is incredible that the Apostles should have given no directions for public worship and for the administration of sacraments; or that the churches, for three centuries, could have maintained decorous worship, and a due administration of Christian ordinances, without Liturgies of some sort. We must therefore suppose, that they had formal Liturgies, which were handed down orally, till the fourth century, and then were committed to writing. And they did not write them so long as they were surrounded with Pagans, because they wished to conceal the mysteries of Christian worship from the knowledge of Pagans and Catechumens. The disagreements among the first written Liturgies, are also proof, that they had come down through an imperfect medium of transmission, like that of oral tradition.

To these arguments it may be replied, That the Apostles did give ample directions for public worship, and for the administration of ordinances. Paul devoted to this subject three entire chapters in his first Epistle to the Corinthians, chapp. xi., xii. and xiv. But these directions were widely different from the complicated rites

which make up the canon of the Mass and the other offices in the oldest written Liturgies. They described and recommended a mode of worship so simple and unceremonious, that the first Christians no more needed written formulas to guide them, than those churches now do, which, in obedience to the same directions, at this day, worship without a Liturgy. The supposition that the Apostles and early Christians refrained from using written Liturgies, lest the mysteries of their worship should become known to Pagans and Catechumens, is confuted by facts. Both Catechumens and Pagans, during this whole period, were allowed and encouraged to attend the entire worship of Christians, except the Eucharist and Baptisms. The whole antecomunion service, therefore, or the *Missa Catechumenorum*, could not have been left unwritten for the reason supposed. And as to the communion service, Paul gives a pretty full account of it; and Justin Martyr, in the middle of the second century, had no scruples in publishing a minute description of it, in his larger Apology, addressed to a Pagan Emperor. (*Apol. I, p. 97, 98, ed. Paris, 1636.*) If therefore any such concealment was ever practised, it must have been after the times of Justin Martyr, and have extended only to the Eucharistical and Baptismal services. (See Coleman's *Chr. Antiqq.* p. 35, 36.) Yet the *Missa Catechumenorum*, equally with the *Missa Fidelium*, remained unwritten during this long period. The disagreements in the oldest written Liturgies are no evidence of the long use of oral formulas; for they have much more the appearance of having arisen from essentially different usages in different countries, than from the faulty memories of those who were

accustomed to repeat-memoriter one and the same Liturgy. We will add, that it seems morally impossible that all the Christian ministers, for three hundred years, should have been able to repeat, without book, so long and complicated a service as the ancient Liturgies prescribe; or indeed, any Liturgy founded on the same general model. If, then, the Early Christians had an oral Liturgy, which all the Clergy could commit to memory, it must have been a very different thing from the subsequent written Liturgies; and, of course, also from the Liturgies now used in the modern Greek, Romish, and Anglican churches.

That no Liturgies whatever, or no prescribed formulas of worship, were in common use, in the Apostolic times, may be inferred from the fact that they are never mentioned, or alluded to, in the New Testament. No Evangelist or minister is there charged to obey the canons, and never violate the rubric. No church is commended for its skill and scrupulousness, or censured for its ignorance and irreverence, in regard to the prescribed formulas of worship. Christians are exhorted to "pray without ceasing," and to "pray with all prayer and supplication, *in the Spirit*," but are never directed to "*say prayers*," or to repeat the prescribed formulas of prayer. Paul, in describing the requisite qualifications for a Bishop or Elder, never mentions a strong and well stored *memory*, or ability to repeat the prescribed service correctly. And Peter, directing men how to officiate in sacred things, says: "If any *Minister*, let him do it *as of the ability which God giveth*," (1 Peter iv. 11;) i. e. according to his best ability—not according to a prescribed ritual. If the Corinthian church had been

accustomed to use the canon of the Mass, they would not easily have fallen into such irregularities as are stated; or if they did, Paul need not have written them a whole chapter (1 Cor. xi.) on the nature and the form of the Lord's Supper: he might have said, simply: Follow strictly the Liturgy, as I Paul taught you. So also, if their ordinary worship had been conducted by a priest, and in accordance with any such Liturgy as afterwards prevailed, they would never have needed the instructions which Paul gives them, respecting spiritual gifts, especially that of tongues; 1 Cor. xii. and xiv. Nor would he have reproved them, and given them such specific rules for their public worship, as he does in 1 Cor. xiv. 26-40. Indeed, it seems manifest, from the passage referred to, that all Christians, in that age, might speak and pray in the public assemblies; and that all such performances were extemporaneous: they who then ministered, did so, literally and truly, as of the ability which God gave them. (1 Peter iv. 11.) And the same mode of worship continued in the churches down to the times of Justin Martyr; for he tells us, that the president of the assembled people then *prayed* (*ᾠοῦν δύναμις*) according to his ability. (Apol. I, p. 98, ed. Paris, 1636.)

CHAPTER V.

CONSTITUTION OF THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCHES.

Q. 71. Are any modern churches modeled exactly after the primitive pattern ?

A. No. But the polity of the Congregational churches corresponds in its general features with that of the Apostolic churches.

Q. 72. What is the Congregational system of church polity ?

A. It is that system of church order and discipline which was established in New England by the first English Colonists, and is now maintained by the great body of their descendants.

The Congregational system of church government is also adopted by the churches of the Congregational Union of England and Wales, by the French Evangelical churches generally, by the Baptist churches in Great Britain and America, and by many churches called In-

dependent or Congregational in various parts of the British Empire and of the United States.

Q. 73. What was the origin of the Congregational churches of this country ?

A. The Congregational churches of New England were founded by certain ministers and Christians of Great Britain, who, in the early part of the 17th century, were driven by religious persecution to seek an asylum in this newly-discovered country.

Q. 74. Was there any thing peculiar in the origin of modern Congregationalism to favor the presumption that the system is nearly identical with that of the primitive churches ?

A. Yes ; the Congregational system was entirely framed out of the Bible by men learned in the Scriptures, who believed that Christ and his Apostles had there prescribed a complete ecclesiastical system of absolute authority.

Such men as John Robinson, John Owen, Thomas Hooker, and all the early writers in favor of Congregationalism, went to the Bible to learn how the church was originally constituted, with a strong sense of obligation to ascertain and scrupulously follow the primitive pattern. This explains the fact that the first churches of New England submitted to the expense and inconvenience of maintaining two ministers instead

of one—having discovered, as they supposed, that every local church in primitive times had both ruling and teaching Elders. And this presents very strong presumptive evidence that the system adopted by them is closely conformed to that in the New Testament. No other ecclesiastical system has this presumption in its favor. The oldest systems, as the diocesan Episcopal, are known to have departed widely from the primitive pattern, and in modern times they have not been modified with a view to conform them to that model. The Wesleyan Episcopal Church was not even professedly built on a careful examination and copying of the Apostolic churches.

Q. 75. What are the sources of information respecting the polity of the Congregational churches?

A. The Platforms, standard authors, and especially the practice of those churches.

Q. 76. Have the Congregational churches any Platforms or Constitutions, according to which they are bound to regulate all their proceedings?

A. No. Platforms have been at various times drawn up by Congregational bodies; but the churches of the present day do not feel bound rigidly to follow them. They often refer to them with respect, as embodying the wisdom of their predecessors; but

they are governed in their own practice generally by usage, and in some districts by particular Constitutions.

See "Platform of Church Discipline, gathered out of the Word of God, and agreed upon by the Elders and Messengers of the churches assembled in the Synod at Cambridge, in New England, Anno. 1648:" and "The Heads of Agreement assented to by the United Ministers, formerly called Presbyterian and Congregational; and also Articles for the administration of church Discipline, unanimously agreed upon by the Elders and Messengers of the churches in the Colony of Connecticut, in New England, assembled by delegation, at Saybrook, Sept. 9th, 1708." See also the "Digest of Rules and Usages in the Consociations and Associations of Connecticut," contained in the "Congregational Order."

"Mather's Ratio Disciplinae," and "Mather's Power of the Keys," were generally referred to as guides, before the adoption of the Cambridge Platform. Several modern writers have published treatises, more or less full, upon the Congregational system. "See Upham's Ratio Disciplinae"—"Punchard's View of Congregationalism"—"Bacon's Manual," and "Mitchell's Guide to Church Members."

Q. 77. Do Congregationalists hold that their system exists by *divine right* in such a sense that there can be no true church under any other form?

A. No. They generally hold that devia-

tions from the primitive model are lawful, unless they are contrary to some plain precept or principle of Christianity. See Ques. 7.

We may mention as examples of a lawful departure from primitive practice, the discontinuance of a plurality of Elders in individual churches, of deaconesses, and of the weekly administration of the Lord's Supper ; and as examples of the opposite character, the neglect of Christian ordinances by the Friends, and the usurpation of church power, not properly belonging to them, by the clergy of most sects. This latter class of deviations from the primitive model, Congregationalists look upon as serious irregularities, but do not suppose them to be incompatible with the *being* of a church. They regard as a Christian church any body of credible believers in Christ, united by voluntary confederation for the purpose of serving God in a church capacity, according to their best understanding of the Scriptures ; even if, by misapprehending the mind of Christ, they do not order every thing in the best manner. These liberal views, however, should not make Congregationalists indifferent to the maintenance and extension of that system of church order and discipline which complies with all the laws of Christ's house. See Ques. 11.

Q. 78. What distinguishing points of correspondence between Congregationalism and the primitive system of church order and discipline, can you mention ?

A. According to Congregationalism, a reg-

ular Christian church is a voluntary association of professed believers in Jesus Christ, united together for the social worship of God, and for the administration of religious ordinances. See Ques. 2, 14, 23, 28.

Q. 79. In what sense is a Congregational church a *voluntary* association ?

A. A Congregational church is not a voluntary association in the sense of being a mere human institution, with which believers in Christ are under no kind of obligation to connect themselves. All Christians, or regenerate persons, are justly expected to confess Christ before men, by becoming members of some branch of his visible church. But the association is voluntary in this respect, that it was formed by a free act of confederation on the part of individuals, and not by the authority of any court, civil or ecclesiastical. See Cambridge Platform, ch. iv, sec. 6.

Q. 80. Does Congregationalism recognize the right of any number of persons of suitable qualifications to organize themselves into a Christian church ?

A. The right is unquestionable ; but the expediency of the step depends on the question, whether the organization of those indi-

viduals into a church is desirable for their personal edification, and the glory of God. But Congregationalists invariably recognize a body of believers in Christ, voluntarily united by covenant in a church capacity as a true church.

Q. 81. Must a Congregational church have officers?

A. A Congregational church may exist or have *essential being* without officers; but cannot be complete in *form*, or fully organized without them. See Ques. 8, 15.

Q. 82. What are the powers of a Congregational church?

A. A Congregational church is a democracy. All the members are equal, and all its affairs are definitively determined by a major vote of the brotherhood. They elect their own officers, admit, govern, and expel their own members, and do all other things which, according to the laws of Christ, may of right be done in and over his church.

Q. 83. Is a Congregational church an *independent* body?

A. A Congregational church is independent, because no other church or ecclesiastical body has power to reverse its decisions. It

has no other head than Jesus Christ, and is subject to his authority alone. Hence, in Great Britain, the churches embraced in the Congregational Union of England and Wales, are commonly called independent churches.

A Congregational church, however, is subject to the admonition of sister churches for heresy, lax discipline, or any scandalous offense, and if incorrigible, to a withdrawal of church fellowship. See Upham's *Ratio Disciplinæ*, Ch. II, sec. 20.

Q. 84. What qualification is required for membership in a Congregational church?

A. Credible piety. See Cambridge Platform, Ch. III, secs. 1, 2.

Q. 85. By what process is a Congregational church formed?

A. Whenever several persons, after taking the private advice of some neighboring ministers and Christians, desire to be formed into a church, they invite a number of ministers, or a council, to assemble and aid them in their organization. The council thus assembled inspect the proceedings of those who have called them together; and being satisfied that it is right and suitable to proceed, the council lead them to combine themselves by solemn

vows into a church—accompanied by appropriate religious services and ceremonies. See Upham's *Ratio Disciplinae*, Ch. III.

Q. 86. What are the officers of a Congregational church ?

A. The officers of a Congregational church are of two orders only—Elders and Deacons. The Elder or minister is the preacher or public teacher of the people, and the Chief Executive officer or ruler of the church. The Deacon or Deacons, for there may be two or more, have charge of the temporalities of the church and the care of the poor, and they assist the minister in administering the ordinances of the Gospel. See Bacon's Manual.

Q. 87. Are Congregational ministers known by any other titles ?

A. Yes. They are called the *pastors* and *bishops* of their respective churches. See Ques. 44.

Q. 88. In what manner are men raised to the pastoral office in Congregational churches ?

A. By the free election of the brethren, and a solemn induction into office.

The brethren of the church having first fixed their eyes upon a candidate for the pastoral office over them, and sought the divine guidance in a matter of so great

importance, by fasting and prayer, make the election—and if the ecclesiastical society concurs in their choice, and the pastor elect accepts the appointment, a council of neighboring churches is called, by whose aid he is ordained or solemnly inducted into office. See Upham's *Ratio Disciplinae*, Ch. III.

Q. 89. May a church elect any person whom it deems of suitable character, learning, and talents, to the pastoral office over them?

A. A church has this right inherently, but by tacit consent, for the sake of guarding against an incompetent ministry, the churches do not elect any to the pastoral office, or hear any preach as candidates, except such as have been first approved and licensed to preach by some Association of ministers or pastors, connected with the churches in their communion. The Baptist churches, which are Congregational, do not, we believe, take this precaution, but receive preachers as candidates for the ministry on the recommendation of the churches to which they belong. See Saybrook Platform, Part II, sec. VII. New Englander, Vol. II, Art. Baptist Polity.

Q. 90. May a person be constituted a minister of the Gospel without being elected to the pastoral office over a particular church?

A. Yes. For, although no one can be made the pastor of a particular church, without the vote of said church, a person may be ordained to preach the Gospel, and gather churches in destitute places, to labor as an evangelist among feeble churches, or as a missionary among the unevangelized. Compare questions 36 and 43.

Q. 91. In whom is the power of appointing and ordaining missionaries vested ?

A. The churches or missionary associations which send them forth, make the appointment ; the ordination service is performed by councils convened for the purpose.

Q. 92. Is it agreeable to Congregational usage for every body of ministers of the Gospel to ordain others to the work of the Christian ministry ?

A. No. The work of ordaining ministers of the Gospel is restricted to standing or special councils, composed of pastors and delegates of churches, called together for the purpose by the candidate for ordination, and by those who invite him to be their pastor or missionary. See Upham's *Ratio Disciplina*, Ch. VII, sec. 91 ; Ch. VIII, sec. 92.

Q. 93. What is the process of church discipline in the Congregational churches?

A. It is precisely that laid down in Matt. ch. xviii.

In relation to open, well known, and flagrant sins, some infer a more summary process is proper, from the course which they suppose Paul urges the church of Corinth to adopt in the case of the incestuous man. 1 Cor. v. ch. And this is agreeable to usage in most Congregational churches. Yet it does not appear that Paul censures that church, solely for not proceeding to excommunication, or that he authorizes them to take the last step, without taking the first. He may perhaps have known that the first steps had been taken without reclaiming the offender; and if this was the case, the apostle merely censured the church for neglecting to carry out the process of discipline by a final act of excommunication. See Upham's *Ratio Disciplinae*, sec. 96, and Bacon's *Manual*, p. 101.

In the case of a pastor, the course of procedure is not uniform. In most *consociated* churches, a complaint against a pastor cannot be brought except through the associated pastors of the district to which the church belongs, by whom, if they see fit, the complaint is carried before the consociation for trial and final determination. See *Congregational Order*, pp. 295-98. In churches, not consociated, the course is, for the church to refer the matter either for advice or final determination to a council of neighboring churches. See Upham's *Ratio Disciplinae*, secs. 136, 37.

The simple deposition of a pastor or evangelist from the ministry, does not dissolve his church relations. After his deposition, the church to which he belongs may proceed against him, as in the case of any other member. See Upham, sec. 140.

Q. 94. Is there any appeal in a case of discipline from the decision of the church?

A. The decision is final unless the church consents to refer the matter to a mutual council for advisement before the final decision.

An aggrieved member may, however, ask for a mutual council, and if that is denied by the church, he may call an *exparte* council to re-examine his case, and to advise the church to recall its censure, if it appears to the council to be unjust.

The decision of a council is considered merely advisory; and as such may be either accepted or not accepted by the church, yet the moral influence of councils is so great, that the churches are seldom known to disregard their advice. And indeed it would be thought disrespectful to a council, and a breach of Christian fellowship, if a church should refuse to accept its advice in matters merely prudential. See Upham's *Ratio Disciplina*, Ch. XIV., secs. 182-3.

Many Congregational churches, particularly in Connecticut, are *consociated*, as it is called; that is, they have constituted themselves into standing mutual coun-

cils, one or more in a county, consisting of the several pastors, with a lay delegate from each church. To these bodies the churches represented in them, have agreed, in advance, to submit their difficulties ; and the result or decision of the council is in all cases to be a final issue. See Congregational Order, p. 300.

CHAPTER VI.

CONGREGATIONALISM PREFERABLE TO OTHER SYSTEMS OF CHURCH POLITY.

Q. 95. What other Ecclesiastical systems have been adopted by modern churches ?

A. The most important are the Episcopalian and the Presbyterian.

Q. 96. Why should Congregationalism be preferred to these systems ?

A. Congregationalism deserves this preference, because it appears to be the only system in existence that complies fully with the spirit and precepts of Christianity.

Q. 97. To what inspired rule or principle does Congregationalism conform, which other systems disregard ?

A. Congregationalism leaves in the hands of the brotherhood the discipline of the church, of which the other ecclesiastical systems divest them.

Q. 98. Is this a sufficient reason for preferring Congregationalism ?

A. Why is it not ? Are we not commanded by Christ, if a brother trespass against us, to take certain steps to gain him, and if these fail, to "tell it to the *church*" ? And have we then a right to prefer a constitution of the church which refers these matters to a very different tribunal ?

Q. 99. Is this the only point in which Congregationalism alone complies with the rules of the Gospel ?

A. No. The denial by other sects of the fundamental principle of the primitive church, that all ecclesiastical power is vested in the hands of the brotherhood of each particular church, or that such a society is a complete church in itself, independent of all foreign control, carries with it many and wide departures from the rules which Christ has given for the right ordering of His church. The several local churches, for example, are constituted by Christ their own guardians. They are not only to judge of the qualifications of all who enjoy their communion, to admit and exclude persons as members, but to see to the character and doctrine of their teachers, and to keep

alive a spirit of piety by the mutual watch and exhortations of the members : in one word, they are respectively charged with the duties of self-government, of self-culture, and of self-protection. These important trusts are taken from the churches by other ecclesiastical systems, wholly or in part, and committed to the hands of the clergy.

Q. 100. Is not this an objection which lies also against Congregationalism ; that is, are there not some rules of order prescribed by Christ, to which this system does not conform ?

A. I have no knowledge of any such rule. Congregationalism is not an exact copy of the primitive church ; but it deviates from that original form in none of those particulars which are based upon the nature of things, or upon precepts of permanent obligation.

The most material deviations respect the number of Elders in each particular church, the office of Deaconess, and the Love Feasts ; but these regulations were not founded in the nature of things, or in any permanent necessity, nor were they established by any positive enactment of Christ. The council of elders in each church was no doubt at first adopted in imitation of the form of government which existed in the Jewish synagogues. (See Neander, vol. i, p. 186, and Ques. 33.) There is no scriptural injunction requiring such a board to be

maintained in the church : and as every object of church rule and edification is secured as well or better by having a single elder, the Congregational practice is abundantly justified. It should also be remembered, that Congregationalism admits of a plurality of elders. Churches are not unfrequently furnished with two colleague pastors, and sometimes with a greater number. In respect to deaconesses, as the office had its origin in the peculiar customs of the East, it is properly discontinued among us. Even there it was not enjoined on the churches, but was adopted as a means of introducing the gospel into the private apartments of the women. The case is different with those ecclesiastical systems which divest the church, or particular congregation of believers of church rule. By doing this, they take from the church the power of obeying the express commands of Christ ; those, for instance, relating to the admission, government, and expulsion of members. The investiture of the church with all church power seems to be founded in the nature of things. For who can care for the church like the church itself ; or who is so competent to manage wisely all its affairs ? If the business is taken from the brotherhood and placed in other hands, it changes radically for the worse, the whole system of church government.

Q. 101. Is it evident that the Congregational system is better in practice than other systems ? Although they may be less scriptural, is it clear that they are less adapted to this age of the world ?

A. There is certainly a presumption in favor

of the scriptural system ; and the stronger presumption because it was democratical, a kind of government which is best suited to the most intelligent communities ; and of course better suited to this age and country than to the age of the apostles. If all church power was vested in the church in primitive times, it is too late to question the wisdom of continuing the power in the same hands, in this enlightened age.

Q. 102. But is it not true, that the Episcopal and Presbyterian systems of church polity are found in practice to be highly conducive to the peace and purity of the churches under them ?

A. There is, I believe, much sincere piety and fraternal harmony in those communions. The systems of government are no doubt administered with much impartiality and wisdom. And wherever the gospel is preached in purity, the peculiar excellence of Christianity will shine forth in the lives of many of the hearers. The truth is, we are not to look for all imaginable evils to follow a faulty system of church order, any more than we are to suppose that a people cannot be happy and prosperous under a monarchy. Nevertheless, Congregationalism appears to me to have the best tendencies.

Q. 103. What good tendencies do you see in Congregationalism on account of which it is to be preferred to other ecclesiastical systems ?

A. It seems to exert a happier influence on individual piety, usefulness, and intelligence ; to afford the strongest safeguards against corruption in the body of the church, and to be more propitious in its influence on civil society and the world.

Q. 104. What proof is there of the peculiar tendency of Congregationalism to promote individual excellence and usefulness ?

A. Congregationalism impresses the minds of individuals with a sense of responsibility, and calls into exercise their best powers, as judges of all matters of doctrine and practice in the church.

It treats the individual as a *man*, capable of self-government. By respecting him, it inspires him with self-respect ; by imposing responsibilities on him, it qualifies him to bear them. The adage that "circumstances make the man," has all its force in relation to him. He looks, or at least is moved to look into all questions of doctrine, of Christian experience, and of ecclesiastical order, not for his own sake merely, but that he may do his duty as one of the governors of Christ's church.

Congregationalism also calls forth all the energies of the individual in the work of benevolence. As a mem-

ber of the church he considers it his duty to promote the spiritual good of others to the extent of his ability, by improving his gifts of prayer, of exhortation, and of counsel. He is not trammelled by fear of doing something for Christ too holy to be done by a layman, but does as a duty whatever good he is qualified to do. He devises new plans of usefulness, which he is in no way hindered by ecclesiastical lawgivers from carrying into execution. He keeps up with the age in his knowledge of theological truth. He is not restrained by the imposition of a creed, framed in less enlightened times, from *proving all things and holding fast that which is good*. He is constantly inquiring, praying, studying for a purer faith as well as a purer heart. This freedom of action, freedom of inquiry, and sense of responsibility, it cannot be denied, distinguish the Congregational churches. In the same degree in which other communions are less distinguished by these spurs of intellect, and facilities of individual usefulness, has Congregationalism the preëminence. (See Punchard's View of Congregationalism, pp. 172-175.

Q. 105. What peculiar safeguards to the purity of the church does Congregationalism afford?

A. The fundamental principle of Congregationalism, that none but regenerated persons may properly be admitted to membership in the church, taken in connection with the fact, that no person can be admitted except by vote of the brotherhood, after an examination by the

whole church or a committee appointed for the purpose, is the strongest possible barrier to the admission of unworthy members. When the doors of a church are vigilantly guarded by all the members, it is a ground of assurance that its spiritual life and vigor will be preserved. This assurance is strengthened by committing to the church the care and discipline of the members. It is unquestionably true, that these duties may be well discharged by a board of elders or a single clergyman; and much better discharged than is sometimes done by a Congregational church. But the question is, to which is the purity of the church most safely intrusted. To the church itself, I have no doubt. Whoever has consulted history, or is acquainted with human nature, must know that ambition, timidity, favoritism, are more apt to pervert the action of church officers than of the church itself. But the most important consideration belonging to this subject, is, that Congregationalism is much more favorable to the work of reform, than its rival systems. When the church has become corrupt, how shall piety and doctrinal purity be restored to it; or how shall true religion be revived in the community? According to Congregationalism, the piety

which remains may then secede and reorganize itself in a new church: or if no spiritual life remains, if all the members have become apostate from the true faith, then on the reappearance of piety in any number of individuals, they may be immediately organized into a new church. Every congregation of believers associated for church purposes, is a complete church, invested with all the powers which are necessary to attain its end, and may come into existence, according to the Congregational system, without the concurrence of a bishop or presbytery. But not so with those systems which see in particular churches only the parts of a national or provincial church, and hold all their proceedings subject to revision by powers without and above them. Revivals of piety and attempts at reform are liable to be suppressed in their very beginnings, by such ecclesiastical courts. See 8th chapter of Bacon's Manual; also Punchard's View of Congregationalism, pp. 176-182.

Q. 106. What evidence is there that the influence of Congregationalism on civil society is peculiarly propitious?

A. There is an obvious tendency in a popular form of ecclesiastical government, both to sug-

gest to the minds of men a popular civil government, and to qualify a people for self-government. This tendency is the parent of our own free civil institutions. See Punchard's View of Congregationalism, pp. 169-172.

Q. 107. How is Congregationalism likely to confer greater benefits on the world than other ecclesiastical systems?

A. The way is obvious, if we consider a moment the tendency of Congregational Christianity to subvert both civil and ecclesiastical despotisms, the two grand obstacles to the progress of society in religion and general happiness. Wherever this form of Christianity goes, it must carry with it that free spirit, intelligence, and capacity for self-government, which will gradually liberalize, if it does not wholly change, the constitutions and laws of nations. And as to ecclesiastical despotisms, Congregationalism supersedes them wherever it gains possession of the soil.

Whether this is a blessing to the world or not will indeed be differently decided by mankind according to their opposite views of the practical influence of the hierarchies of Christendom. Some will justly consider these hierarchies as so many obstacles to the progress of truth; incumbrances to Christianity; burdens on the church.

They load the people with taxes to support their higher clergy in a state of grandeur and luxury that ill accords with the spirit of the gospel. They frown on all reforms. Change, progress, improvement, are to them only omens of their own downfall. How different would be the prospects of Protestant Christianity within the boundaries of the Papal and Greek churches, if those hierarchies were destroyed, and all the particular congregations of Christians organized on the Congregational plan! How would the spirit of piety, of intelligence, of general improvement, revive in all those countries! What new success would crown the efforts of Protestant Missionaries to restore the corrupt churches of the old world to evangelical purity!

Q. 108. What other peculiar excellence do you perceive in Congregationalism?

A. The Congregational mode of discipline is more effective than any other. This is owing in part to the fact that "the punishment which is inflicted of many," carries with it the weight of public opinion. Compare the effect of Congregational discipline with that of some other churches. How slight a sense of shame and alarm is felt by an Episcopalian or a Methodist on being excluded from the church by the sole act of the minister in charge! It is a very trivial affair in comparison with the proceedings of a Congregational church, according to the rules in Matt. xviii; and produces on the sub-

ject of discipline and the community at large, a very different and inferior impression. But this is not the sole excellence of the Congregational method of discipline. Discipline is well described (Mitchell's Guide, p. 62) as another and a *better* thing in the hands of the church than it is in merely official hands. The aid of the brethren is of great use in reclaiming offenders. It is the very influence which Christ has prescribed to be employed, and by far the most likely to effect its object.

Q. 109. But is it not alledged as a practical objection to Congregationalism, that it has no public Confession of Faith by which to secure uniformity of views and guard the purity of the churches?

A. This objection is doubtless of great weight with those who are accustomed to depend on such Formularies of Doctrine and Discipline for safety, but it has in fact no weight whatever. For—

1. The Bible is the standard of the Congregational churches. They have each a particular Confession, and commonly a few simple articles of practice, drawn up for the sake of convenience, although they do not appeal to these formularies as “standards” of faith and

practice. In this they are sustained by the Bible, for that "declares its own authority and sufficiency, and requires a direct reference to itself on all questions of a religious or moral nature." 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17; John v. 39; Matt. xxii. 29.

2. In this respect the Congregational churches conform to the primitive model. The first Christians had no standard or test of truth but the Bible. See Mitchell's Guide, p. 50. Compare Ques. 30.

3. Notwithstanding Congregationalists have no other authoritative rule of faith or practice than the word of God, their sentiments are uncommonly well defined, well known, and harmonious. (Mitchell, p. 51.) What the Congregational Union of England and Wales say respecting the denomination in that country, is equally true of the churches in the United States. "They wish it to be observed, (they say,) that notwithstanding their jealousy of *subscription* to Creeds and Articles, and their general disapproval of the imposition of any human standard, they are far more agreed in their doctrines and practices than any church which enjoins subscription and enforces a human standard of orthodoxy."

4. The effect of these human standards is proverbially the opposite of what it is intended to be. They do not accomplish their object either as defenses against heresy or as bonds of union and concord. Mitchell's Guide, pp. 53-56.

CHAPTER VII.

THE PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCH.

Q. 110. What was the origin of the Protestant Episcopal Church in this country?

A. The early clergymen of this denomination were missionaries from the established church of England. Their parishes were included in the diocese of London, previous to the American Revolution.

Q. 111. What was the origin of the established church of England?

A. It is the ancient church of England as it was reformed and organized by the court and bishops in the reigns of Henry the VIII, Edward the VI, and Queen Elizabeth.

Q. 112. How does the Protestant Episcopal church in the United States differ from the church of England?

A. The church of England is connected with the State as a national establishment, and

has various officers, as Archbishops, Archdeacons, Deans, Prebendaries, Canons, Minor Canons, Chancellors, Vicars-general, Commissaries, Officials, Surrogates, Proctors, &c., which are not known in this country. The monarch of England is the supreme head of the church, with power to nominate the Bishops, reverse votes of Parliament, and stop the proceedings of the clergy.

Q. 113. Wherein does the Constitution of this church, in the United States, differ from that of the primitive churches, as described in the New Testament ?

A. The Protestant Episcopal church is incapable of being assembled in one place, that the members may give their vote in ecclesiastical affairs ; and the several congregations of which it is composed are all obliged to an absolute uniformity of faith, worship, and discipline. They are not so many distinct churches, but together constitute one national church.

Q. 114. How many orders of ministers are there in the Protestant Episcopal church ?

A. Three ; Bishops, Priests, and Deacons.

Q. 115. What is the office and authority of the Bishops ?

A. They have the sole power of ordaining the clergy, of consecrating churches, and of administering the right of confirmation. They also have great authority over the inferior clergy.

Q. 116. What have you to object to the superiority of the Bishops over the parochial clergy?

A. No such distinction of ministers is appointed by Christ in his church, but on the contrary he has expressly forbidden them to assume dominion over one another. See Matt. xx. 25-27, xxiii. 8.

Q. 117. What is there objectionable in the manner of ordination by Bishops?

A. They require all whom they ordain, to declare that they are moved by the Holy Ghost, in undertaking the ministerial office; and then pretend to confer the Spirit by the imposition of their hands, saying, "Receive the Holy Ghost," &c.

Q. 118. Can none officiate as ministers in the Protestant Episcopal church, who have not received Episcopal ordination?

A. No; all other ordination is pronounced invalid. Even ordination by Methodist Bishops is considered insufficient, because it has

no higher authority than Presbyterian ordination, the first Methodist Bishop having been consecrated by a presbyter, John Wesley.

Q. 119. What is the common argument for the exclusive right of the Bishops to ordain?

A. That they have derived the right by uninterrupted succession from the Apostles.

Q. 120. What is objected to this right by uninterrupted succession?

A. There are several objections:

1. The Scriptures nowhere mention it as necessary to render ordination valid.

2. There is no reason why it should be necessary. What good purpose would be answered, if instead of tracing their ordination to Mr. Wesley, the clergy of the Methodist denomination could trace it back to the Archbishop of Canterbury? Would it give them any new ideas? Would it make them more able or more devoted ministers of the New Testament? Would it add to the force of their preaching, or to the sanctifying influence of Christian ordinances administered by their hands? Certainly not. What good purpose then could it answer? Was this doctrine of succession an expedient of the Apostles to preserve the external unity of the church, or, as

it is said, to prevent schism or secession from the Catholic church ? This is the use to which it is now attempted to put it ; and strange as it may seem, Episcopalians cling to it as a "principle" which is ultimately to reunite the scattered fragments of the universal church. That state of things which they hope to see, viz: all Christians combined in one denomination, if it shall ever come to pass, is not to be effected by such a miserable device. The expedient, if it was apostolical, has accomplished nothing ; for we see the churches of Rome and of Constantinople early divided, and subsequently, the church of England separating from that of Rome, besides a multitude of other divisions in every age of the church. And it is remarkable, if this doctrine is apostolical, that the greatest evils the kingdom of Christ ever suffered, have been produced by the efforts of its adherents to secure this unity and uniformity. Why, moreover, if the Apostles established this law of succession for the sake of unity, did they not record so important a fact ? The truth is, they never did establish it ; for nothing would tend so directly and powerfully to build up a spiritual despotism in

the churches of Christ ; and to perpetuate the worst corruptions that might infest them.

3. The Protestant Episcopal church cannot prove that her ministry is derived by a regular succession of ordinations from the Apostles.

This is admitted by the best scholars in her own communion. See Archbishop Whateley, in his late learned work on the Kingdom of Christ, Essay II, sec. 30.

Q. 121. What is the highest authority in the Protestant Episcopal church in this country, where there are no archbishops ?

A. The sovereignty resides in the individual diocesan churches, each of which forms its own constitution, frames canons for internal government, and decides on all cases of discipline, except that the Bishop must be approved, ordained, and, when impeached, tried by his peers, that is, by other Bishops. But all general matters relating to the whole church are regulated by a triennial Convention, which frames canons, regulates the Liturgy and offices of worship, decides on the formation of new dioceses, appoints missionary Bishops, and holds correspondence with foreign bodies. This Convention has also the power of alter-

ing or amending its own constitution, by publishing the proposed alteration at one triennial meeting, and adopting them at a subsequent meeting. It is composed of all the Bishops, who form an upper house ; and of clerical and lay delegates from the several dioceses, who form a lower house ; and the concurrence of both houses is requisite to the validity of its acts. See Constitution of the Protestant Episcopal church in the United States of America.

Q. 122. What is the nature and design of the rite of confirmation as performed by the Bishops ?

A. It is designed for young persons, who thereby take upon themselves the vows which their sponsors made in their names at their baptism.

Q. 123. What does the Bishop do on these occasions ?

A. He thanks God for having regenerated them by water and the Holy Ghost, and forgiven all their sins. He then lays his hands upon the head of every person to certify them all, by that sign, of God's favor and gracious goodness towards them.

Q. 124. What is required of persons in order to their being thus confirmed?

A. Nothing more than their having a certificate from their minister, that they can say the Lord's prayer, the creed, the ten commandments, and the catechism; and their answering all together to the question, "Whether they renew the vows made in their name at their baptism?"

Q. 125. What objection is there to this ceremony?

A. It has no foundation in Scripture, and is attended with very dangerous consequences.

The principal text urged in favor of confirmation is nothing to the purpose, viz: Acts viii. 14, &c., which refers to the extraordinary gifts conferred by Peter and John. The confirmation spoken of, Acts xiv. 22, and xv. 41, was not by imposition of hands, but by *preaching*.

Q. 126. What dangerous consequence is likely to arise from this rite?

A. Ignorant people who have too good an opinion of the Bishop to think he would declare a falsehood, are likely to look upon themselves to be what he has declared they are, pardoned, regenerated, and interested in God's

favor, and so conclude their state is safe, while yet they continue in their sins.

MODE OF WORSHIP.

Q. 127. What is the mode of worship in the Protestant Episcopal church?

A. A form of prayer is statedly used, called the Liturgy or Common Prayer.

Q. 128. Are forms of prayer in themselves sinful?

A. No: it is better to pray by a form than not at all, or in an indecent, incoherent manner.

Q. 129. What objections then are there to Liturgies?

A. 1. The Scripture is silent respecting the necessity or expediency of them, and refers to none in use, though it treats largely on divine worship, and mentions the prayers of good men, on various occasions. See Ques. 70.

2. It seems unreasonable that Christian ministers should be confined to an invariable form in their prayers, more than in their sermons.

3. The influence of sympathy between the minister and his hearers is in a great measure

lost. The people are moved and excited to devotion by the fervor of an extemporary prayer, the evident breathings of the spirit of their pastor. A prescribed form breaks this chain of sympathy.

4. A form tends to promote indolence in ministers, so far as it prevents the exertion of their faculties.

5. The constant repetition of the same thing tends to deaden the affections of the worshippers, and promote formality.

6. Liturgies cannot be adapted to all the circumstances of different societies, and the several events which may occur, and which ought to be noticed in public prayer.

Q. 130. What is exceptionable in the general form and construction of the Liturgy?

A. 1. The method is irregular and confused. The several prayers, collects, &c., are without any order or connection.

2. The parts into which it is divided are too many and too minute. Some of the distinct prayers, and especially the collects, seem to have no distinguishing object, but are little more than introduction and conclusion. See Col. for 2d Sunday after Epiph., 2d before Lent, 3d, 4th, and 5th in Lent.

3. It is full of tautology and vain repetitions.

4. It is in some views very defective. The confession is too general ; as, indeed, are the petitions and thanksgivings.

5. The service is too long ; in consequence of which too little time is given for preaching the Gospel.

Q. 132. What is exceptionable, as to sentiment, in particular parts of the Liturgy ?

A. 1. In the office of Baptism.

Such expressions are used concerning the efficacy of that rite as naturally lead persons to conceive of it as a saving ordinance.

God is thanked for *having regenerated the child by his Holy Spirit*. The water is called the *laver of regeneration*, by which the child, being born in original sin and in the wrath of God, is received into the number of the children of God, and heirs of everlasting life. Accordingly in the Catechism the child is taught to say of its baptism,—“ wherein I was made a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of Heaven.” A sentiment as dangerous as it is unreasonable and unscriptural. The catechism recognizes a distinction between the “outward sign” and the

“inward grace;” yet the doctrine commonly maintained is, that the “inward grace” is conferred on the child by the Holy Spirit at the time of applying the “outward sign.”

2. In the Communion Service.

Some expressions strongly favor the notion of Christ's real presence in the bread and wine: a superstitious regard to which is encouraged by the use of the term *consecration*, and by bowing the knee, to receive the bread and wine.

The words used are: “Grant us therefore so to eat the flesh of thy dear son Jesus Christ, and so to drink his blood, that our sinful bodies may be made clean by his body,” &c. When the minister gives the bread, he says, “The body of our Lord Jesus Christ preserve thy body and soul;” and when giving the cup, “The blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, preserve thy body and soul,” &c.

3. In the Burial Service.

This one service is read at all funerals without distinction, whatever the age, circumstances or character of the deceased may be; even though he is known to have been a most abandoned sinner and hardened infidel, and to have died without any signs of repentance;

the only exceptions being *unbaptized adults, self-murderers, or excommunicated persons*, which last case very rarely happens. In this service the minister is required to style the deceased—"Our deceased BROTHER"—an expression which must often wound the conscience of the minister, and be attended with very dangerous consequences to the people, who may naturally encourage themselves to go on in sin, on the presumption of obtaining happiness at last, since they so often hear persons of the most infamous characters, and others with no pretensions to piety, called, when dead, *Christian brethren*.

4. The use of the Apocryphal Books. The reading of Lessons from the Apocryphal books seems to give the Apocrypha equal authority with the Bible, and encourages the Papists in their errors.

5. In the Litany, or General Supplication, the manner in which the *Trinity* is addressed, at the beginning, has been thought by Trinitarians (Calvin in particular) very exceptionable, as it is without Scripture precedent.

Q. 132. How is it to be accounted for that the Liturgy contains so many exceptionable things?

A. The plain reason is, the greater part of it was taken from the old Popish Liturgy; from which the first Reformers prudently made as little variation as possible. Some improvements have been made by the church in this country.

When the Devonshire men were stirred up to rebellion on account of the alteration of their Mass Book, King Edward VI tells them in a letter, to quiet them, As for the service in the English tongue, it perchance seems to you a *new* service, but yet, indeed it is no other but the old; the self same words in English. Accordingly some of the Popes offered to confirm the English Liturgy. See Art. Liturgy, in the New Englander, Vol. I. See Delaune's Plea, 47-52.

CEREMONIES.

Q. 133. What are the objectionable ceremonies used in the Protestant Episcopal Church?

A. 1. Bowing at the name of Jesus. 2. Signing with a cross in baptism. 3. Particular gestures in worship, especially kneeling at the Lord's Supper.

Q. 134. Why should not the people "bow at the name of Jesus"? Are we not required to do so?

A. The passage of scripture (Philip. ii. 10)

on which this practice is founded, cannot reasonably be taken in a literal sense ; and it is absurd to suppose that such a ceremony should be enjoined in honor of the Son, and not of the Father, or at the mention of the name Jesus, and not of any other of the numerous names by which the Son of God is called. The practice savors of superstition.

Q. 135. What is the pretence for the Priest's crossing the forehead in baptism ?

A. It is said to be done as a token that the person baptized "shall not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified, and manfully to fight under his banner."

The cross in baptism was first introduced in the fourth century, by a sect called the *Basilidians*.

Q. 136. What is objected to this ceremony ?

A. 1. Christ never appointed it.

2. If the mark of a cross must be used as a badge of a disciple of Christ, it ought to be either visible and permanent, or often repeated, as it is by the Papists.

3. To use this sign in baptism, is to make two sacraments of one, according to the definition of a sacrament, as an "outward visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace."

4. If there were no particular objections to the practice, it would be condemned by the general principle, that no additions should needlessly be made to the simple ritual of the primitive church.

Q. 137. Why should we object to so trifling a ceremony as kneeling at the sacrament of the supper, since we do not scruple to kneel in prayer?

A. The practice of kneeling took its rise from the Popish adoration of the elements as the very body and blood of Christ; and it cannot be repeated in the presence of those who regard them in this light, without encouraging their superstition and idolatry.

Q. 138. Are there not some other questionable *ceremonies* observed in this church?

A. There are several customs, which partake of the nature of ceremonies, and are liable to much the same objections: for example, the wearing of particular habits, observing certain days as holy, the distinction of places and the use of sponsors in baptism.

All these are mere human and arbitrary appointments, unknown in the primitive church, ill according with the simplicity of the Gospel, and calculated to satisfy the religious feeling of the people with forms, rather than with divine truth.

The office of sponsors is particularly exceptionable, because the sponsors are made to personate the child at its baptism, and solemnly engage for its religious education, though often they expect never to have any thing to do with its education ; and they even *promise* and *vow* these things in its name: 1st. That it doth renounce the devil and all his works, the vain pomp and glory of the world, with all covetous desires of the same, and the sinful desires of the flesh. 2d. That it doth believe all the articles of the Christian faith. 3d. That it will keep God's holy will and commandments, and walk in the same all the days of its life: which engagement is such as none can fulfill.

DISCIPLINE.

Q. 139. Is there any thing objectionable in the discipline of this church ?

A. Yes ; it is not in the hands of the brotherhood of each particular church, according to the primitive pattern ; and all persons who have been confirmed by the bishop, and who are not excommunicated nor grossly immoral, are allowed to come to the communion, contrary to the order of the primitive church, which was composed solely of those who gave credible evidence of having been " born again." It is true that the minister charges those that come to the sacra-

ment, to be truly penitent for their sins, &c., but there is no personal examination to see whether they are so, and nothing required at their confirmation to satisfy a sober and intelligent Christian, that they have ever passed from death unto life.

CHAPTER VIII.

CONSTITUTION OF THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH.

Q. 140. What was the origin of the Methodist Episcopal church in the United States ?

A. It was founded by John Wesley, who, in 1784, by the imposition of his own hands, ordained Thomas Coke for the Episcopal office in America, and commissioned and directed him to set apart Francis Asbury to the same office. By the hands of these Bishops and their successors, the present clergy of this church have chiefly received ordination. See Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church, Ch. I, sec. 1.

Q. 141. What is the general frame of this church ?

A. 1. All the particular associations of believers are embraced in one general organization.

The entire field is divided into several annual Conferences—thirty-three at the present time in the United States, and one each in Texas and Liberia. Each annual Conference is divided into several Districts—and each District into several Circuits and Stations. A Station is one society or congregation. A Circuit includes several societies and congregations.

2. The societies and congregations are governed and instructed for the most part by an itinerant ministry.

It is the duty of the Bishops or general Superintendents to travel over the whole field, and exercise their Episcopal functions in every part of it. They are general, rather than diocesan Bishops—for they have equal authority in all the Conferences, and divide the field among them in such a way that each goes over the whole ground. A Presiding Elder has charge of each District; but one person cannot fill the office in the same District more than four years in succession. And no pastor can remain more than two years on a Circuit or Station. See Discipline, Ch. I, sec. 4, Ques. 3.

3. There are only two orders in the ministry, Deacons and Elders or Presbyters. See John Emory's Defense, sec. 5, p. 20.

The Elders, Presiding Elders, and Bishops, are considered of the same order, differing only in respect to office. The Deacons are the second order, who have not yet risen to the rank of Elders. There are many itinerant preachers

who have not been ordained, but are candidates for the order of Deacons.

4. The business of organizing churches, teaching the people, and administering discipline, belongs wholly to the ordained ministry. See Discipline, Ch. I, sec. 3.

But this does not imply that the clergy shall not call in the aid of others. Hence they have various officers in the church to assist in pastoral labor and in the administration of discipline, viz: Local Preachers, Exhorters, Class Leaders, Stewards, and Committees.

5. The chief government of the church is vested in various official bodies or judicatories.

The highest is the General Conference, which meets once every four years, and is composed of delegates from the Annual Conferences. The next in order are the Annual Conferences, which are composed of the traveling preachers within their several bounds. The next are Quarterly Conferences. These are composed of the Preachers, itinerant and local, of a circuit or station, with the Exhorters, Class Leaders and Stewards. See Discipline, Ch. I, sec. 4, Ques. 4. Ch. I, sec. 3, Ques. 2. Ch. I, sec. 21.

6. The Presiding Elders, and the pastors of the several circuits and stations, receive

their appointments directly from the Bishop, at each Annual Conference—for the appointments are made or renewed every year.

Churches or societies may petition for a particular minister, but can do no more. So ministers, if they see fit, can solicit an appointment to a particular field of labor, but still they are subject to the appointing power. See Discipline, Ch. I, sec. 4.

Q. 143. How are members admitted to the Methodist Episcopal Church?

A. The official minister or circuit preacher receives into full membership any baptized person whom he considers worthy, provided he has been on trial and has met in class for six months, and is recommended as a suitable person for church fellowship by his class leader. See Discipline, Ch. II, sec. 2.

Q. 143. How are unworthy members excluded from this church?

A. "The Society," or several individuals, are summoned by the minister to try the case, and if the accused is found guilty, the minister suspends or expels him from the church, as the circumstances of the case may require. If either the minister or the subject of discipline is dissatisfied with the result of the trial,

he may appeal to the next Quarterly Conference. See Discipline, Ch. II, sec. 7.

Q. 144. What are the official powers of a pastor or preacher of a Circuit?

A. He Licenses the exhorters; appoints and removes at pleasure the class leaders; and has the general oversight and direction of all the spiritual and secular affairs of the Circuit. See Discipline, Ch. I, sec. 10.

Q. 145. What are the official powers of a Presiding Elder of a District?

A. He has the control and direction of all the traveling and local preachers within his District. See Discipline, Ch. I, sec. 5.

Q. 146. What are the powers of the Bishops?

A. They have the sole power of appointing the Presiding Elders, of stationing the preachers, and of moving them whenever they think best, subject to certain restrictions. They have also the power of ordination, and the general control of the temporal and spiritual concerns of the church. See Discipline, Ch. I, sec. 4, sec. 5, Ques. 1. Yet this power of stationing the preachers may be taken from them at any time by the General Conference—on which body, indeed, they are wholly de-

pendent. See "A Defense of our Fathers," by John Emory, p. 64.

Q. 147. What have you to object to this system of church polity?

A. My principal objections are—

1. It divests all the particular churches of church power, and vests the whole power in the hands of the clergy, by whom, history informs us, it is extremely liable to be abused.

2. It wholly overlooks and abrogates the rules of discipline given by Christ in the 18th chap. of Matt.

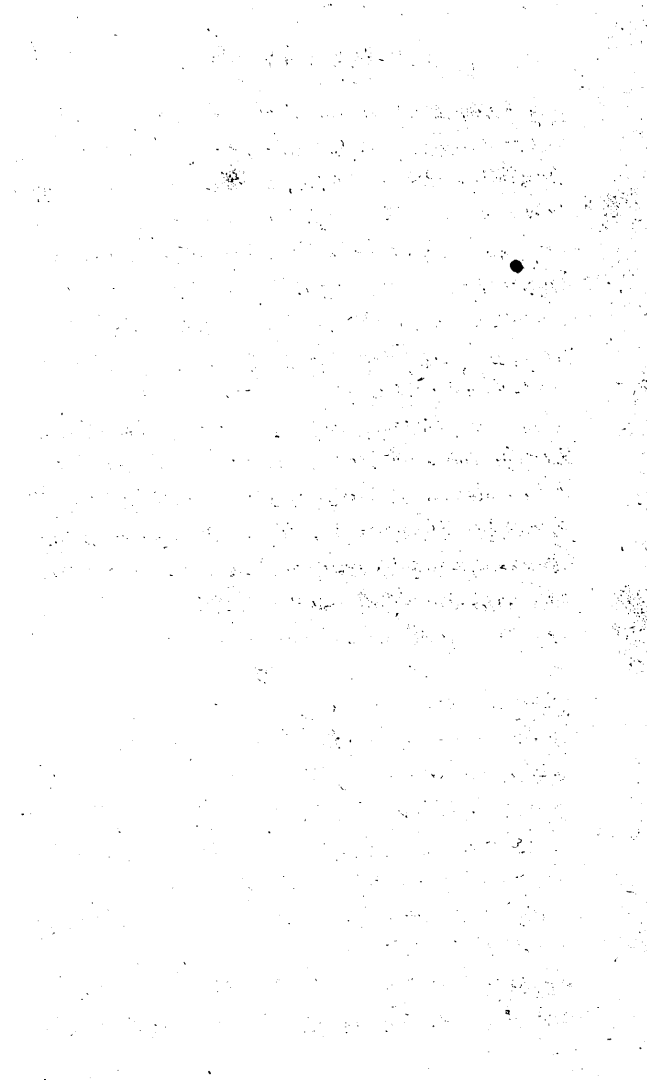
3. It takes from the brethren the right of choosing their own religious teachers, on which right, more than on any other, the church depends for defense against false and incompetent teachers.

4. It deprives the churches of resident pastors and teachers, contrary to primitive practice, and to the highest advancement of the members in Christian knowledge and experience.

Q. 148. Has not the Methodist *itinerant* system been productive of great good?

A. Undoubtedly that feature of the Methodist economy has conduced much to its rapid growth and advancement. But it seems to be

adapted to the early operations of a new sect, and to the wants of a sparse population, rather than to the highest edification and improvement of the people. This requires a permanent ministry. And it should also be recollected, in instituting a comparison between the Congregational and Methodist systems, that the employment of traveling preachers, although reduced to a system and carried to a great extent by the Methodists, is not unknown to Congregationalism. Evangelists and missionaries are not confined to the care of a single church; and it would be in perfect keeping with Congregational order to supply new and thinly inhabited regions with an itinerant ministry.



CHAPTER IX.

CONSTITUTION OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.

Q. 149. What was the origin of the Presbyterian church in this country ?

A. Among the first colonists of this country were persons from England and Scotland, who were partial to Presbyterianism ; and in the course of the 18th century Presbyterian churches were organized and Presbyteries constituted, with a Synod embracing the whole body of Presbyterian ministers, called the Synod of Philadelphia. Until 1727, this Synod had no written confession or form of government. In that year it adopted the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms, and also recommended to the churches under its care, "the Directory for Worship, Discipline, and Government, commonly annexed to the Westminster Confession." In 1741, the Synod was rent asunder, and two rival Synods were

formed, viz : New York and Philadelphia. In 1758, these Synods were united ; and in 1788, they adopted "the Constitution of the Presbyterian church in the United States of America." Under this constitution, with a General Assembly as the highest Judicatory of the church, they remained united until 1837, with the exception of the schism of 1810, when the Cumberland Presbyterian church was constituted. In the year 1837, the General Assembly passed an act excising from the church the Synods of Geneva, Utica, Genesee, and the Western Reserve. These excised bodies and other portions of the church which sympathized with them, regarding the excising act of the assembly as unconstitutional, retain their former title of "the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America." In their General Assembly of 1840, they enacted that that Body shall hereafter meet triennially, instead of annually, and that the judicial decisions of the Synods shall in all cases be final. In the other body of the same name, the General Assembly is still the highest ecclesiastical court. See Ques. 150, Ans. 5.

Q. 150. What is the general frame and Constitution of the Presbyterian church ?

A. 1. Like the Protestant Episcopal and Methodist Episcopal churches, the Presbyterian is in theory a *national* church. "The several different congregations of believers, taken collectively, constitute *one church* of Christ; called emphatically, *the Presbyterian church*. See "Form of Government of Presbyterian churches in United States," p. 397, 18mo. 1821.

2. A *Church Session*, as it is called, consisting of the pastor and several ruling Elders, is "charged with maintaining the spiritual government of the Congregation." Plan of Gov., Ch. X, § 6.

3. From the decisions of the Session, appeals may be made to a higher court, called "the Presbytery," which is composed "of all the ministers, and one ruling Elder from each congregation," within a given district.

4. An appeal may be made from the decisions of the Presbytery to a *third* judicatory, called "the Synod," composed of the ministers and Elders of several Presbyteries.

5. A *General Assembly*, composed of a delegation of ministers and Elders from the several Presbyteries of the whole church, is constituted the supreme tribunal and a court of ap-

peal for the final issuing of all cases, which may be carried up to it from the inferior judicatories. This assembly has authority over the whole church; and is in fact the *Presbyterian church itself*. See Ques. 149.

~~Q. 151. In what important respects~~ does this church differ from the Protestant Episcopal and the Methodist Episcopal churches?

A. 1. In maintaining the parity or equality of all who labor in word and doctrine. Both the Methodist Episcopal and the Protestant Episcopal churches require of the inferior clergy an oath of *obedience* to their superiors.

2. In recognizing more fully the right of the several churches to appoint their own officers. In the Methodist Episcopal church the people have no voice in electing any of their officers, and in the Protestant Episcopal church, the Bishop, who is in a sense the pastor of all the churches of his diocese, may not be the choice of a single congregation. And in all cases the people are obliged to *petition* their bishop to grant them the pastor of their choice.

Q. 152. In what important respect does the Presbyterian church agree with those just mentioned, contrary to the primitive and Congregational systems?